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Biography

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THE
EARLY MEDICI

Photograph, Alinari

Florence from S. Miniato





THE EARLY MEDICI

BY
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*Tout mouvement nous descouvre. . . . Entre les
functions de l'ame, il en est de basses : qui ne la veoid
encores par là, n'acheve pas de la cogoistre ; et à
l'aventure, la remarque lon mieulx où elle va son pas
simple. . . . Chasque parcell, chasque occupation
de l'homme l'accuse également qu'un autre.*

MONTAIGNE.

*All motions discover us. . . . Amongst the
functions of the soul, there are some of a lower and
meaner form, and be that doth not see her in these
inferior offices, as well as those of nobler note, never fully
discovers her ; and peradventure she is best discover'd
where she moves her own natural pace. . . . Every
particle, every employment of a man, doth exalt or accuse
him, equally with any other.*

COTTON'S TRANSLATION.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
PREFACE		xi
CHAPTER		
I THE FIRST MEDICI	1	
II COSIMO, THE GREAT MERCHANT. (1429-35)	15	
III THE COUNCIL OF FLORENCE. THE HUMANISTS. (1435-9)	37	
IV COSIMO'S RULE. (1439-58)	46	
V COSIMO'S LAST YEARS. (1459-64)	57	
VI PIERO IL GOTTOSO. (1464-9)	70	
VII LORENZO IL MAGNIFICO, THE MAN AND THE POET	85	
VIII LORENZO'S TOURNAMENT AND MAR- RIAGE. (1468-9)	108	
IX FIRST YEARS OF LORENZO'S RULE. (1469-78)	119	
X THE CONSPIRACY OF THE PAZZI. (1478)	134	
XI WAR WITH THE POPE. LORENZO'S VISIT TO NAPLES. (1478-87)	145	
XII FAMILY EVENTS. LORENZO'S FRIENDS	161	
XIII GIOVANNI MADE CARDINAL. LORENZO AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS POWER	181	
XIV PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA AND SAVONA- ROLA	192	
XV LORENZO'S DEATH. (1492)	201	
XVI PIERO THE UNFORTUNATE. (1492-4)	214	

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
XVII	PIERO'S EXILE AND DEATH. (1494-1503)	233
XVIII	CARDINAL GIOVANNI DEI MEDICI. (1503-13)	244
XIX	POPE LEO X. EARLY YEARS. (1513-17)	258
XX	THE CARDINALS' CONSPIRACY. GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE NERE. (1517-19)	280
XXI	LEO'S COURT AND AMUSEMENTS. SCHOLARS AND MEN OF LETTERS	289
XXII	LEONINE ROME. RAPHAEL AND THE ART WORLD	313
XXIII	FRANCIS I AND CHARLES V. LUTHER. THE DEATH OF LEO X. (1518-21)	324
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	343
	GENEALOGY	347
	INDEX	348

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
FLORENCE FROM S. MINIATO. <i>Photograph,</i> <i>Alinari</i>	Frontispiece
Palazzo della Signoria left, Cathedral left centre, S. Croce right	
COSIMO PATER PATRIAE, BAS-RELIEF ATTRIBUTED TO VERROCCHIO. <i>Photograph,</i> <i>Staatliches Museum, Berlin</i>	16
THE MEDICI PALACE (NOW RICCARDI PALACE) IN THE VIA LARGA, NOW VIA CAOUR, FLORENCE. <i>Photograph, Alinari</i>	32
GIOVANNI DI COSIMO, BY MINO DA FIESOLE. MUSEO NAZIONALE, FLORENCE. <i>Photograph, Alinari</i>	64
PIERO IL GOTTOSO, BY MINO DA FIESOLE. MUSEO NAZIONALE, FLORENCE. <i>Photograph, Alinari</i>	80
LORENZO IL MAGNIFICO, ATTRIBUTED TO NICCOLÒ DI FORZONE SPINELLI. MUSEO NAZIONALE, FLORENCE. <i>Photograph,</i> <i>Alinari</i>	90
LUCREZIA TORNABUONI, BY BOTTICELLI. <i>Staatliches Museum, Berlin</i>	104
SPRING, BY BOTTICELLI. UFFIZI, FLORENCE. <i>Photograph, Alinari</i>	132
Mercury, on the extreme left, said to be Giuliano; Venus in the centre is La Bella Simonetta	

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
PALLAS AND THE CENTAUR, BY BOTTICELLI. UFFIZI, FLORENCE. <i>Photograph, Alinari</i>	154
The Robe of Pallas is adorned with the Medici device of the three rings. Bay of Naples in the background	
VILLA OF CAREGGI. <i>Photograph, Alinari</i>	162
DEATH-MASK OF LORENZO IL MAGNIFICO. SOC. COLOMBARIA, FLORENCE. <i>Photograph, Alinari</i>	208
PIERO THE UNFORTUNATE, BY BOTTICELLI. UFFIZI, FLORENCE. <i>Photograph, Anderson</i>	234
This has been called Giovanni di Cosimo, but there is strong evidence in favour of its being Piero	
LEO III APPROACHING THE PALAZZO DELLA SIGNORIA, BY VASARI. PALAZZO VECCHIO, FLORENCE. <i>Photograph, Alinari</i>	272
The Loggia dei Lanzi is in the background	
POPE LEO X WITH HIS COUSINS, CARDINAL GIULIO DEI MEDICI (left) AND CARDINAL LUIGI DEI ROSSI, BY RAPHAEL. PALAZZO PITTI, FLORENCE. <i>Photograph, Alinari</i>	292
CARDINAL BIBBIENA, BY RAPHAEL. PALAZZO PITTI, FLORENCE. <i>Photograph, Alinari</i>	310
GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE NERE, BY TITIAN. UFFIZI, FLORENCE. <i>Photograph, Alinari</i>	336

PREFACE

To anticipate the obvious comment upon the appearance of a new book on the Medici, I may be allowed to point out that this is the first to attempt to give their history as a connected story. The Medici, like their city of Florence, have long had a place of their own in the hearts of English lovers of Italy. Roscoe, who was a pioneer, laid the foundations of their popularity and his work has been followed by a number of good English books about the family—Ewart, Maguire, Ross, Young, to mention only a few, and above all Armstrong's *Lorenzo* in the Heroes of the Nations series, which for some reason has not found its way into the Italian bibliographies. I have endeavoured to set the Medici against their times and to gather round them the most notable of their friends. As far as possible I have made use of the newer material that has come to light in recent years. At a time like this their experiment in dictatorship should be of special interest. More particularly I have tried to bring out the importance of their business in the early days of the family, to describe in some detail the humanists among whom Cosimo found most of his friends, to dwell upon Lorenzo's work as a poet and on his literary circle and to bring out the influence of Leo X in politics as well as to give a picture of his court.

L. C.M.

Nostra.

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST MEDICI

THE tourist visiting Fiesole, the Etruscan strong hold that is so much older than the lovely city of the lilies clustering round the Arno at his feet, will, if he has any knowledge of the history of Florence, turn instinctively to the North-East. On his way up he has passed the Villa Medici, but there, some sixteen miles off, lies the broad valley of the Mugello among the foot-hills of the Apennines and in the Mugello is Cafaggiuolo, which is known to have been longer in the possession of the Medici than any other of their farms and villas. Indeed, there is reason for thinking that it is from the Mugello that the family originally came: more than one branch owned lands there. The earliest known ancestor of the great historic branch is Giambuono, who dates from the twelfth century; if we may trust an inscription in the church of the Assumption near S. Piero a Sieve, he was a priest, but doubtless he married and had his family before taking orders.

The origin of the name of Medici, like that of their coat of arms, the red balls on the gold field, has been the subject of many conjectures and legends. There is no proof that they were doctors or that the balls were pills, though S. Cosimo was the saint of the faculty,—such an explanation is almost too simple to be probable—nor, for that matter, that the balls were the marks on the shield of Averardo, the champion of Charlemagne, who slew the giant Mugello in battle. Averardo is as mythical as the giant, but at least the story strengthens the association of the Medici with the Mugello. They were duly credited with

Roman ancestry by the courtly genealogists of a later day.

The Medici did not belong to the nobility and all that we know of them tends to confirm the view that, like most of their compeers, they were traders, farmers and bankers. They were, however, of sufficient importance to own houses and towers in Florence itself as early as the twelfth century at a time when Florence must have looked not unlike the corner of S. Gimignano where the towers frown down at us from the wall like prehistoric monsters that have somehow stumbled into a world that is not theirs. These lay in the Piazza dei Medici, near the church of S. Tommaso, within the precincts of the old Ghetto. The vanished Albergo del Porco was said to occupy the site of the family loggia, when a loggia for family gatherings was as essential as a tower for defence.

Distinction came first to a collateral branch. In 1299 Guccio, a grandson of Giambuono, became Gonfalonier of Justice. This was then the highest office in the Republic. The Palazzo della Signoria, dominating with its great tower the Piazza del Mercato, was the centre of the Signoria, the government of Florence, the Colleggio, which consisted of the Gonfalonier, the six Priors of the Greater Guilds, the two of the Lesser and the two of the Quarters, with the sixteen Gonfaloniers of the Companies. During their term of office they never left the Palace. So respected was Guccio that he was buried outside the Baptistery in a stone sarcophagus of the fourth century, now in the Riccardi (Medici) Palace. Salvestro, a distant cousin, was a prominent figure in his day. He was Gonfalonier at the time of the rising of the Ciompi, as the wool-combers were called, in 1378, which greatly weakened the power of the nobles. Though the rebellion originated in Salvestro's efforts to champion the men whom the Oligarchy were excluding from office, he neither directed the storm, nor did he help in quelling it: clearly he was

not a man of much force of character. Some of the Medici were among the banished when the rising was crushed. Henceforth they became closely associated with the popular cause and in 1393 Vieri, a cousin of Salvestro, was asked by an armed mob of malcontents to put himself at their head in a new attempt to break the tyranny of the ruling clique, led by Maso degli Albizzi, who had suffered severely during the Ciompi troubles ; but he declined the honour.

This government of the nobles, which lasted from 1393 to 1420, was, according to Guicciardini, the wisest, the most glorious and most successful that Florence ever had. These were the years when Pisa was taken, thanks largely to Gino Capponi, and Leghorn purchased from Genoa, thus giving Florence an outlet by sea, while the war with Gian Galeazzo Visconti of Milan was brought to a successful conclusion. They were also the years of the great beginnings of Florentine art. The many devices for weakening the power of the executive—the changing of the members of the Signoria every two months, the multiplication of councils and boards, the elections by lot—really played into the hands of the oligarchy. By manipulating the “scrutiny” of the men eligible for the various bodies, which preceded the placing of their names in the *borse* or bags from which the magistrates were drawn, the governing clique could control the elections.

An uncle of the Averardo dei Medici, who was known as Bicci, of the historic branch, left one of those note-books and diaries which were then often kept by the merchants of Florence and which shed a vivid light on the family life of the time. Such was their greatness, he assures us, that, if a man insulted another, people would say, “If he behaved like this to a Medici, what would happen ? ” The family was still powerful, but a hundred of the men had died since he was born and it is interesting to find him complaining in 1373 that there were but few families and few

children. The Medici had paid their tribute to the appalling ravages of the plague, the results of which were long felt. In its disintegrating effects it may be compared to the war in our own day. To it the Renaissance in Florence owed something of the individualism which is perhaps its most striking characteristic, as well as of the strong religious, almost fanatical tendencies which broke out in the Flagellants, smouldered in the diaries and letters and were to sweep all before them under the inspiration of Savonarola.

Another Averardo had been Gonfalonier in 1314, but the founder of the fortunes of the Medici was his great-grandson Giovanni, the son of Averardo called Bicci, and therefore known as Giovanni di Bicci. He was born in 1360. Bicci left him well off, but it was his own genius for business, in which he rose superior to the ablest of his countrymen at a time when they had no rivals in Europe, that made him by far the wealthiest banker and bill-broker in Italy, while his tact and character enabled him to lay the foundations of the influence upon which his descendants rose to political greatness.

It must not be forgotten that Florence was essentially a great commercial city ruled by its merchant princes, with an extensive foreign trade, more especially with the West of Europe. The wool trade was the staple, especially after the Florentines had begun to buy the wool in England as well as in Spain, generally from our great monasteries of the North, for several years ahead. Closely connected with the Arte della Lana was the Calimala, the Guild of the cloth-makers, who not only made cloth, but also imported large quantities from France and Flanders, which they finished and dyed, often returning it to the country of its origin. Many of the best-known families of Florence were among these Mercanti and owned warehouses. Such were the Albizzi, Bardi, Capponi, Peruzzi, Pucci and Rinuccini, while the Rucellai owed their name as well

as their fortune to the discovery of the famous Florentine red dye. The Medici were registered in the Calimala and later in the Arte dei Cambiali.

These trades naturally established agencies abroad and it was in their wake that the bankers and bill-brokers followed, at first merely to assist them in their financial dealings. Important though the cloth trade was, and great as was the fame of the best Florentine red cloth, the "panno di grano di S. Martino", it was to the skill and experience, the enterprise and wide connections of her bankers that Florence owed not a little of her prosperity. The rare ability, the keen brain of the Florentine, which made his city the intellectual and artistic capital not merely of Italy, but of Europe, found a ready outlet in business, enabling her citizens to accumulate the wealth upon which her great art and literature were built and without which they could never have arisen. Florence gave her name to the florin, then a beautiful gold coin, and the bill of exchange is said to have been an invention of the Florentines in the thirteenth century. They were soon controlling the exchange throughout Western Europe. Florentines also generally managed the finances of the Papacy in France, Flanders and England. In 1422 there were seventy-two bankers and bill-brokers in the neighbourhood of the Mercato Vecchio and 2,000,000 florins in circulation. Their Guild, the Arte dei Cambiali, was early the most exclusive.

These wide commercial dealings did much to mitigate the lot of the Florentine political exiles, who generally came from the great trading families. The Acciaiuoli were all-powerful at Naples, where the finances had long been in Florentine hands. Boccaccio, one remembers, was sent thither by his father, who was in the employ of the Bardi, and there he met Fiammetta. Another branch of the Acciaiuoli was in Greece. A notable fact about these exiles is their unswerving loyalty to their country. They never spoke ill of Florence and they did all they could to

■ THE FIRST MEDICI

promote her interests. This is well brought out in the charming letters of Alessandra Strozzi to her sons, who had been banished by the Medici, which also give an interesting picture of the business life of the day. Niccolò Strozzi went to Naples, where he prospered greatly and stood high in favour at court. His brother, Lorenzo, went to Barcelona, Avignon and Bruges, where he remained till he joined Niccolò in Naples. Then Niccolò managed the bank and his brother the warehouse. A visitor wandering along the quieter canals and quays at Bruges to-day, one of which is called the Quai Spinola, can get an impression of what life there may have been when it was the centre of the great cloth trade of the West.

The names of the leading families are no less prominent in the banking world and the young men served regularly in the shops and warehouses and offices. The Peruzzi had a chain of sixteen agencies stretching right across Europe from London to Cyprus. Nowhere were the Florentine houses more numerous than in the South of France, notably at Papal Avignon. The Medici interests also extended throughout France and Flanders, where the Florentines controlled the wool trade, of which the Low Countries were the centre. They were able to open the Bruges branch in 1421 owing to the growth of foreign trade due to the capture of Pisa and, as its success depended on the wool trade, it kept in close touch with the English branch. The alliance with Milan and the opening of the Medici bank there helped to increase its prosperity and later Cosimo and his son Piero maintained a steady correspondence with it.

In the days of Cosimo the family was taxed at 428 florins. Of these, 70 were paid by the bank at Florence, 70 by the branches of London and Bruges, then the commercial capital of Flanders, 96 by those at Avignon and Geneva, 65 by the Venetian agency and the rest by the different partners. These details bring

out the importance of the Medici foreign commitments. Towards the end of the fifteenth century Commines referred to them as "the greatest house that I imagine there has ever been in the world, for the Medici name gave their servants and agents so much credit that what I have seen in Flanders and England almost passes belief"; and he goes on to relate how they advanced 420,000 crowns to Edward IV of England to help him recover his kingdom, besides guaranteeing another large loan made to him by the Duke of Burgundy.

In this community of merchant princes Giovanni dei Medici, kindly and humane, as Machiavelli calls him, steadily rose to the first place. Level-headed, though possessed of little culture, he was a shrewd judge of men and events. He owed much of his influence to his instinctive avoidance of petty political intrigues, which he heartily disliked. He used to say that, instead of making political trouble, he would go back to business, for he was well aware that his success in this was the cause of the respect he enjoyed and of the political power he had acquired, and his business was always his first interest. Such was his tact and sense, his wise self-effacement, that Maso degli Albizzi and the other leaders of the oligarchy ended by respecting him, in spite of his hereditary democratic leanings, his popularity with the people and his championship of their cause and that of the Lesser Guilds. In the dying speech of advice to his sons which Cavalcanti puts into his mouth he bids them not to be for ever at the Palazzo della Signoria, as if it were their shop, but wait till they are sent for and then behave respectfully and not proudly.

The portrait by Bronzino, doubtless based on trustworthy material, shows the face of a tradesman, strong-willed and full of character, without a trace of the successful politician or the man of the world. Like most of the males of the family he owed nothing to his looks. The Medici were bourgeois: they did

not choose their wives for their *beaux yeux*. Moreover, they were born in wedlock, whereas the majority of the princes of the Quattrocento, so strikingly handsome as a whole, were bastards, whose mothers had generally caught the eyes of their fathers by their beauty. Giovanni was tall and strong, broad of face, with a dark, rather sallow complexion, possessed of a wittier tongue than one would have imagined from his melancholy appearance. "In an official position he was gracious, but not very eloquent, for Nature had denied him the gift of winning speech", which was then so highly valued, but his reasoning was sound and his advice good. Everyone spoke well of him and no one had a more sincere regard for him than his rival in politics, Niccolò da Uzzano.

If Giovanni di Bicci was the last man to seek office, he was quite ready to do his duty when called upon, and to do it well, for, like most of his class, he had a high sense of patriotism, such as we find pervading the treatise of Leon Battista Alberti, *Del Governo della Famiglia*, wrongly attributed to Agnolo Pandolfini. Frugally though a Florentine merchant lived in ordinary life, he grudged no expense on great occasions. Giovanni went on several important embassies and was Gonfalonier in 1421. With Cardinal Cossa, afterwards Pope John XXIII, his relations were especially close. He acted as banker to the Roman Curia and he established branches in Germany and Hungary. During the Council of Constance he ended by virtually controlling all the monetary and exchange dealings of the Powers there, and his success helped not a little to give him his commanding position in the world of finance. His son, Cosimo, went with the unwilling John XXIII to Constance to act as his financial adviser and when, in 1418, he was imprisoned by the Council, it was the Medici who provided the 38,000 florins which were paid, with the consent of Martin V, the first universal Pope after the schism, to Louis of Bavaria for his release. Again, it

was the Medici who sheltered the fallen Pontiff when he came to Florence and helped to bring about his reconciliation with Martin. His enemies accused Giovanni di Bicci of making a fortune out of the money left by John XXIII, whose executor he was, but as a matter of fact he died almost penniless and it was his banker who erected the tomb for him in the Florentine Baptistery, employing his favourite sculptor, Donatello, to make the recumbent figure of the quondam Pope upon it.

Subsequently Martin V threatened Giovanni di Bicci with excommunication unless he returned at once the larger of the two mitres that John had pledged to him for the heavy sums he had borrowed. Giovanni was too wise not to comply and he was soon high in favour at Rome. His financial ability and his money were indispensable to the Pope, who granted him and his wife the coveted privilege of the portable altars. Doubtless he also improved these relations when Martin came to Florence, though the Pope never forgave the Florentines for laughing at the street boys when they sang outside his apartments at S. Maria Novella, where he was striding angrily up and down,

Il Papa Martino
Non vale un quattrino,
Neppure un lupino.¹

In 1400 occurred what was perhaps the worst outbreak of plague since that of 1346, immortalized by Boccaccio, and it was in fulfilment of a vow made for the occasion that the city arranged a competition for designs for the bronze doors of the Baptistery, which was still the cathedral of Florence. It was fitting that

¹ Old Pope Martin
Isn't worth a farthing,
Nor even a lupin.

The incorrigible *monelli* put the Sienese on their guard, producing strained relations, by singing, during the Lucca war,

Ave Maria, grazia piena,
Avuto Lucca, avremo Siena.

Giovanni dei Medici should be on the committee that ushered in the great epoch of Italian art of the Quattrocento by selecting the design of Ghiberti. The flowering time of Renaissance art in Florence is inevitably associated with the Medici, who are rightly credited with having encouraged it in every way by their patronage. But in this as in their methods of government they were merely carrying on and developing with the thoroughness that their position and wealth allowed the methods of their age and class. The beginnings date from the palmy days of the Albizzi and their associates of the oligarchy, when Giovanni di Bicci was but a minor personality : it was then that all the great artists who were to work for Cosimo dei Medici were born and grew up.

Like most of them Ghiberti had had his early training as a goldsmith, under his step-father, Bartolo di Michele, a noted master in the art, who urged him to come back from Rimini, where he was working for the Malatesta, to compete for the doors of the Baptistry. The final choice lay between him and Brunelleschi ; the panels they sent in are both preserved, and so evenly were they judged, though the superiority of that of Ghiberti is now obvious, that the Arte dei Mercatanti decided to share the commission between them. Fortunately Brunelleschi refused to accept divided honours and went back to Rome in a temper, soon to be joined there by Donatello. How the great names are linked together.

Ghiberti began his first door in 1403, but it was not ready till 1424, when he was enthusiastically commissioned with the second. This was not finished till 1452, three years before his death—that marvellous piece of work which Michelangelo pronounced to be fit to be the gate of Paradise. The doors could hardly have been produced except at a time when an artist was expected to be universal. Not only had Ghiberti been trained as a goldsmith, but, in addition to being a sculptor, he also painted and worked as an architect.

It was he who made the windows for the cathedral, as well as famous tiaras for Eugenius IV and Martin V ; and he also spent many months in devising a suitable setting for the cornelian cameo engraved with the story of Marsyas, one of the best known of the Medici jewels, entrusted to him by Giovanni di Bicci, which was said to have belonged to Nero : it took the form of a winged dragon couching among ivy leaves, all in gold.

Meanwhile Ghiberti's defeated rival, Brunelleschi, was in Rome, studying every detail of the architectural remains of the old world, always at the back of his mind being the thought of how to raise the cupola of S. Riparata, later the cathedral of his native city. With this object in view he made a special study of the Pantheon. When the question was once more mooted, he remained alone in his opinion. The vivid account which Vasari gives of the controversy shows how vital such a question was to the eager, keen-brained people of Florence, with their strong artistic feeling. In the end he got his way. In 1420 he was definitely given the task but, to his bitter chagrin, Ghiberti was made his colleague and paid the same salary. Only after a struggle was Brunelleschi induced to undertake the work on such conditions, but the glorious dome, the first of its kind to be built in modern Europe, is there to bear witness to the genius of its creator. " It remains a *tour de force* of individual genius, cultivated by the experience of Gothic vault-building and penetrated with the greatness of Imperial Rome." It was finished in 1436.

As he grew older Giovanni dei Medici played a more prominent part in politics. Intrigues and jealousies were slowly weakening the governing clique and strengthening the opposition, of which he was the leader. The power of Niccolò da Uzzano, leader of the nobles, differed little from that later enjoyed by the Medici. The historian Cavalcanti was at the Palace one day when the Signoria summoned a

pratica and asked the advice of the leading citizens. Niccolò slept soundly during the speeches. When the discussion had continued for some time he awoke and, with the sleep still in his eyes, mounted the *ringbiera*, or tribune, and gave his opinion, which was instantly agreed to. Cavalcanti then realized that important questions were decided at private suppers or in the offices of the clique or even in the churches—for the religious fraternities were often hotbeds of intrigue—anywhere, in fact, but at the Palace. Thus the extremely democratic character of the constitution defeated its own ends. This was the way in which the continuity essential to effective government was secured.

When Rinaldo degli Albizzi proposed to reduce the Minor Arts to seven, the same number as the Greater, thus sensibly weakening their power, Uzzano agreed that the idea was excellent, but said that it was out of the question unless they won over Giovanni di Bicci, "the mainstay and leader of the artisans and also of a number of merchants, who regard him as a father not only of all the Lesser Guilds, but of the Greater as well". They might have crushed Giovanni earlier, but they had let his power grow; if they could win him, the people would be leaderless. Giovanni naturally refused to commit political suicide and his refusal helped to increase his popularity. Both Giovanni and Uzzano were too wise to allow an open breach. Uzzano declared that, if his party used force, they would have to act without him. The nobles did what they could to humiliate Giovanni, keeping his followers and friends out of office and summoning him to the Palace as little as possible. His sons, and still more his ambitious nephew, Averardo, almost had to drag him there, but he refused to play into the hands of his enemies by making trouble.

The general discontent at the existing system of taxation came to a head in 1425. As it dated from the days when Florence was still an agricultural community

land was taxed heavily, but movable property, which constituted the chief wealth in the existing city of traders, escaped very lightly. Public finance was in a serious state. A fresh and up-to-date valuation of property was suggested. This was not popular with the wealthy merchants, but they were forced to accept the inevitable. The *catasto*, as the new system of taxation was called, was brought in by Niccolò da Uzzano and Rinaldo degli Albizzi. Giovanni di Bicci seems to have expressed his approval of the principle of equality of taxation, declaring that, if it would really produce the promised blessings, it would be as well to proceed with it, otherwise not. It was generally believed that he was responsible for the measure, but in a debate he expressed a doubt whether it would give the results desired and urged economy in expenditure instead. Naturally he would not oppose a measure so popular, but he could hardly be expected to give enthusiastic support to a bill brought in by his rivals or to forget that he would be one of those upon whom it would press most heavily, though it was to be a valuable weapon against their enemies in the hands of his descendants.

The new tax was levied only upon surplus income. Due allowances were made for necessary expenditure, such as house and warehouse property, with all repairs and similar expenses, and also for each member of a family. The tax was light, but, though there was a proviso that it should not be levied more than twice a month, we read of thirty-six *catasti* being levied on one day when things were going badly in the Lucca war. That model of virtue, Palla Strozzi, paid the most, being assessed on 507 florins, Medici coming next with 397. Niccolò da Uzzano now paid on 250 instead of on 16.

Giovanni, rather a shadowy figure, died in 1429 at the age of sixty-nine, three years before Niccolò da Uzzano and his own wife Piccarda, who came from the old Florentine family of the Bueri. In the dying

speech given him in Cavalcanti's history, he told his sons, Cosimo and Lorenzo, that they were in a better position than any other merchants in Tuscany, or, for that matter, in Italy. They must be merciful to the poor and charitable, as he himself was in a marked degree. "Never advise against the wishes of the people; if they choose an unwise course, do not speak as if giving advice, but use moderate and persuasive arguments." He bids his daughters pray for his soul and gives his sons his blessing. Cosimo must be a kind and good brother to Lorenzo and Lorenzo respect Cosimo as the elder.

Most of the great merchant houses were intimately associated with a particular church, which benefited by their public spirit and rivalry. The Medici and seven other families had chapels in S. Lorenzo, one of the oldest basilicas in Italy, which had been consecrated by St Ambrose. It was in a ruinous condition and when it was proposed to restore it, Giovanni, to whom Florence also owes the Ospedale degli Innocenti, took the lead. He engaged Filippo Brunelleschi to do the work on a uniform plan and ultimately defrayed most of the cost, including that of the sacristy, himself. It thus became the Medici church and a fine piece of work it is in its restrained classicism. Hither he was borne on an open bier, followed by his sons and by twenty-eight other Medici, and here he lies in the old sacristy with his wife Piccarda.

CHAPTER II

COSIMO, THE GREAT MERCHANT (1429-35)

GIOVANNI DI BICCI was the self-made millionaire : for all his influence, he did not hold a dominating position in politics ; he remained essentially a banker and a merchant. His son Cosimo was the greatest financier in Italy, if not in Europe, and kept in close touch with his vast business undertakings, but from the first he found himself in the forefront of the great merchant princes who ruled Florence. At the time of his father's death he was already a man of forty, having been born in 1390, on the day of SS. Cosimo and Damiano (September 27th), with a wide experience of commercial, political and diplomatic life. At twenty-five he had made such an impression that he is said to have been glad to go to Constance with John XXIII to escape the jealousy he had aroused. On the imprisonment of the ex-Pope he left Constance in disguise, being in danger of arrest, and travelled for two years in Germany and France. He visited the chief agencies and foreign branches of the firm in these regions, acquiring a thorough knowledge of this side of the business. He had, of course, received a sound commercial training and worked regularly in the bank.

On his return he was sent on various official missions to Milan, Bologna and Lucca, and in 1426 to Rome to the Pope. He never failed to look after the affairs of the firm on these journeys. He was well called the Great Merchant, for, in spite of the absolute power he came to exercise in Florence, he never neglected his business, which was, he well knew, the foundation of

his success. He was always, as his son Piero says, not merely a prudent, but an adventurous trader. Nor did he ever attempt to claim any more exalted position.

Cosimo was the true founder of the greatness of the Medici. As Guicciardini put it, there has been but one Cosimo in Florence. He was above the middle height, thin, sallow-complexioned, quiet in manner and speech. In later life he became distinctly venerable in appearance. The ugly face with the great hook nose and thick lips, heavy rather and of an Etruscan cast, is that of a thinker, not of a man of action, shrewd and with a lurking, sardonic, almost cynical touch of not unkindly humour; for he possessed in a high degree the *arguzia* that was already much prized by the quick-witted Florentines. His sayings and retorts were as pithy as they were witty and often double-edged. They show us a man of wide experience and knowledge of the world and of rare judgment, whom business and politics had early robbed of all illusions, the man we see in his portraits. He had been well educated, having a good knowledge of Latin and some acquaintance with Greek. If not a scholar, he was well read and his interests were wide. Theology and philosophy had an irresistible attraction for him. He had the eager brain and the appreciation of all things beautiful of the Florentine of his day. Serious in his tastes, he preferred the company of men of his own kidney, scholars and learned priests. He disliked buffoons and actors and all frivolous amusements. His one relaxation was an occasional game of chess.

If Cosimo is the Great Merchant, the one of his sayings that might best serve him for a motto is his warning that there is a dangerous weed which grows in most gardens and which should not be watered, but left to wither: its name is envy. In talking of the painter Masaccio after his early death he expressed his pity for great men, adding that envy clung to them like their shadow; and throughout his life he did



Cosimo Pati Pattiac, bas-relief attributed to Verrocchio
Staatsliches Museum Berlin

everything that he could to avoid arousing it. But his wealth and the power it gave him, combined with his leading political position, made it impossible for him to escape it.

At the head of the younger nobles was Rinaldo degli Albizzi, who had stepped as automatically into his father's place as did Cosimo into that of Giovanni di Bicci. The Albizzi were the greatest wool and cloth merchants in Florence. Rinaldo had had a wider diplomatic experience than Cosimo and had proved himself a good soldier and able general in the unfortunate war against Lucca. He did not know what fear was, says Cavalcanti : he was clean-handed, well educated, just and firm even to hardness and so simple in his way of living that he was accused of meanness. Unfortunately his pride dimmed his good qualities and made him jealous of those of others. He could never brook the second place. He boasted of his inability to dissemble, of never having belonged to a secret society. Impulsive and headstrong, he was as inscrutable as he was unstable and incalculable, quite incapable of carrying out consistently a definite policy. Such a man would in the long run prove no match for the cool, calculating, sardonic Cosimo, though he lacked Rinaldo's physical courage and more showy gifts.

Rinaldo was the natural leader of the hotheads, but the authority of Niccolò da Uzzano was strong enough to prevent trouble as long as he lived. Niccolò is said to have preferred Cosimo, who, like himself, opposed the Lucca war, to the headstrong Rinaldo. This war of aggression upon the little state of Lucca, which the Florentine Jingoes had long desired to add to the Republic, had been declared at the end of 1429 and was very popular. The pretext was that Lucca had sided with Milan against Florence. Many of the Medici favoured it. Cosimo wrote to his cousin Averardo in 1430 that he did not approve of it, but, seeing that matters had reached such a pitch that the honour of

COSIMO

the Commune was at stake, it was the duty of all good citizens to support it. "I do so myself to the best of my ability and I urge you to do the same, though I know there is no need." The war brought disillusion and disaster to Florence, due in some measure to the jealousy and rivalry between Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Neri Capponi. Cosimo told Averardo that this was not a good time to be one of the Ten of War, "partly in order to give others a chance, and also because it seems to me that, owing to the divisions in our midst, things cannot go well for the city". The war dragged on for four years, peace being made in 1433, on the basis of a restoration of the *status quo*.

Cosimo was made one of the commissioners to negotiate with Lucca. Too much faith should not be placed in the confessions of Tinucci against the Medici, who said that Cosimo's cousin, Averardo, was strongly opposed to peace, because war exhausted the people and threw them more and more into the power of the wealthy Medici; moreover, troubled waters were more profitable to fish in. It does not appear that these were Cosimo's views. He is not pleased at the way things are going in his letters to Averardo, though he has no wish to be in office at such a time. He is writing from Verona, whither he has fled to avoid the plague, in 1430. In 1431, when he is again thinking of leaving Florence to escape it, we learn that his brother Lorenzo has gone from Venice to Milan, where he hopes to do good business, as the Duke is in financial difficulties.

At first there was a good deal of apparent intimacy between Cosimo and Rinaldo degli Albizzi, as there sometimes is between rival politicians, made necessary by the Lucca war and by a common fear of the independent Neri Capponi. But it was only on the surface. Knowing the jealousy and hatred that was felt against him, Cosimo began to keep out of the public eye as much as possible, going rarely to the palace and choosing his friends among men of low

birth and no position, with the result that his enemies scented evil designs, saying that, though he dressed like a peasant, he lived like a king. In fact, Cosimo was too important to be passed over, whatever he might do. It was beyond his power to root up the envy—a notably Southern vice—which he dreaded. His enemies would never be satisfied till he was out of the way.

His position was strong. The people looked up to him as their hereditary champion, though he had no more illusions about them than about anything else. He would say that the people never did anything honest, except for their own advantage or from fear. Cold and aloof, he was the last man to love the crowd. Then there were all those whom Giovanni di Bicci had aided with his wealth, for he had made free use of this method of acquiring friends which Cosimo was to carry even further. Lastly, the Medici had been careful to draw to their side a number of prominent families. Some, like the Tornabuoni or the Benci or the Portinari, rose to wealth by being partners in their business undertakings or by acting as their agents. Others were allied to them by marriage. Cosimo's admirable wife was Contessina dei Bardi, of an old family that still gives its name to the most important street on the south side of the Arno. He lived in the Bardi palace there during his early married life. He was also connected with the Cavalcanti and the Strozzi.

The rival parties quarrelled over every trifle. Cosimo had no taste for such squabbles; they were more in the line of Averardo. He kept away from the Palace and withdrew to Cafaggiuolo for some months. In September, 1433, Rinaldo degli Albizzi saw his chance and determined to make an effort to rid himself of Cosimo. So well known was it who would hold the offices that a blind Benedictine once predicted the names of the Gonfaloniers of Justice for several years ahead. Of the two names now left in

the *borsa* for Gonfalonier one was Bernardo Guadagni, whose family had been ruined in the Ciompi troubles and who was disqualified by his debts. These Albizzi paid and Guadagni was elected. Only two of the eight Priors, the officers next in importance to the Gonfalonier, were Medici men, though they were all indebted to Cosimo.

Cosimo returned to Florence on the rumour of trouble. Like Albizzi, he had been made a member of a *pratica* or special council of eight. On September 7th he was summoned to a meeting at the Palazzo della Signoria and found the Priors also there. He had been warned, but probably thought that he was too powerful to be in danger. The Gonfalonier, saying that he was detaining him for a good reason which would be explained later, sent him off to the cell called the Alberghettino, where Savonarola was later imprisoned, half way up the tower of the Palace. His brother Lorenzo, on hearing of his arrest, fled to Venice with Cosimo's sons and all the valuables upon which he could lay hands.

Meanwhile a *balia*, a committee for the reform of the state, was proposed. The Vacca, the great bell of the Palazzo della Signoria, summoned the people to a parliament; the Gonfalonier harangued them from the *ringbiera*, while the entrances to the square were manned by friends of the government on the pretext of keeping order, all members of the opposition being thus excluded. On such occasions only a few dozen people were admitted, many of whom might not even possess the right of citizenship. They generally belonged to the dregs of the populace. Cosimo, who could see everything from his window, says there were only twenty-three, characteristically explaining the smallness of the numbers by the unpopularity of the measure. "O People of Florence, do you think that on this occasion there are two-thirds of the people of Florence present?" asked the Chancellor. "Yes," came the answer. "Are you content that a *balia*

shall be set up to reform your city for the good of the People?" "The voices in reply were so loud that they must have sounded quite close at hand even in the *Primum Mobile*," says Cavalcanti; "and to whatever Ser Filippo proposed they answered, Yes." All the names suggested were, as usual, accepted and the new government thus gained complete control of the state in the time-honoured way.

To murder Cosimo would have been dangerous. As it was, the condottiere Niccolò da Tolentino, a friend of his, advanced from Pisa to Lastra, and Lorenzo in his flight had been joined by a number of Florentine troops from the Romagna. Niccolò hung back, perhaps fearing that his advance might seal Cosimo's doom, though Cosimo believed that, if he had pressed on, he would have been released and Rinaldo ruined.

Finally, after long discussion, Cosimo was banished to Padua and Averardo to Naples for ten years. All the rest of the family, with two exceptions, were *posti a sedere* (disfranchised) for ten years and also made *grandi* (nobles), thus being disqualified from holding office. There was general satisfaction at the fate of Averardo, who, fortunately for his family, for he was a dangerous hot-head, died in exile; but even the old women in the poorer parts of the town beat their breasts and prayed for Cosimo and there was some difficulty in getting his sentence confirmed by the *balia*. It was too mild for the more violent of his enemies, who would have liked to see him put out of the way. Proposals were made to his gaoler, Malvolti, to poison him, or to allow a couple of his enemies to slip in and strangle him, but he refused to listen to them. Cosimo, who was not blessed with much physical courage, was trembling with fear and fainted when the officials came to inform him of his fate. On hearing it, he fell on his knees and thanked God and everybody concerned, promising the officials every kind of reward when he recovered his liberty.

COSIMO

In spite of this, he still refused to eat anything but a little bread from fear of poison, until Malvolti solemnly promised to give him no food that had not been prepared for himself, saying proudly that one of his blood was quite incapable of poisoning a prisoner. Cosimo embraced him with tears in his eyes, thanking him and promising to reward him if he regained his freedom.

Cosimo, in fact, appears to have won over Malvolti, who now shared his meals.

One evening, when an old friend of the Gonfalonier was supping with them, Cosimo kicked Malvolti under the table and signalled to him with his eyes, whereupon he left the pair alone for a few moments. This was long enough for Cosimo to do his business. The next day the Gonfalonier called upon him and the day after he received two different presents of 500 florins each, while 800 were paid to another high official. At last Cosimo felt safe. "They had not much sense," is his characteristic comment in his diary. "They could have had 10,000 or more for delivering me from peril." Their enemies had forbidden the Medici to draw their money, but any number of people had come forward with offers of cash and credit.

On October 3rd Cosimo was brought before the Signoria, where he made a speech. He had not the Renaissance gift of oratory. A business man and a man of few words, he preferred to deal with individuals and in private. The tone was distinctly cringing. He protested that he would gladly suffer death itself in order to secure harmony in the state. His chief concern was that the Signoria, having spared his life, should see that he was not lynched by the men who were, he knew, waiting outside in the Piazza, thirsting for his blood. It is not death he fears, but the shame of a violent end, which is the sure proof of an evil life. His sufferings would be small, but they would bring eternal disgrace upon the city which had guaranteed his safety. He had done ill to no man: he had

avoided office, which often proves fatal to both body and soul. But his purse had always been at the disposal of his country, whether for buying territory or for hiring troops. In the end the Gonfalonier took him to his own house for the night under a strong escort. Cosimo's power—or rather the power of his purse—had already been manifested. The Venetian ambassador interceded for him, saying that, if he went to Venice, he would not be allowed to harm Florence. The Marquis of Ferrara told the Captain of the *balia*, a subject of his, that, if he fled with Cosimo, he need have no fear.

These offers were a suitable prelude to the Great Merchant's journey into exile. In the mountains above Pistoia the villagers offered him wax and corn, as though he were an ambassador, and more than once people told him not to be so cowardly, promising with tears in their eyes to rise in his favour. At Modena he was met by a number of horsemen with the Governor. In Venice he was welcomed with the full honours of an ambassador. The Medici bank had, of course, a branch there. The Government offered to place all the city and its treasure at his disposal and gave him a house, while a number of private citizens made him presents. Jacopo Donati lent him his splendid palace at Padua and, thanks to Venetian intervention, he was allowed to live where he liked in Venetian territory, so long as he did not come within 140 miles of the Florentine border. He says, quite truly, that it seems inconceivable that such honours should be paid to an exile. But the shrewd Venetians knew that Cosimo must soon return in triumph. The enemies of the House endeavoured to undermine its credit, especially in Rome, where there was a run upon the bank, but large sums of money were sent thither and it was not long before deposits were pouring in as fast as before.

Cosimo's favourite architect, Michelozzo, had refused to stay behind in Florence, insisting on

accompanying him into exile. Cosimo now made the Benedictine monastery of S. Giorgio Maggiore his home and he showed his gratitude for the hospitality of the monks by having their library enlarged and redecorated by Michelozzo, who also carved a crucifix for them. Thanks to his patron, Michelozzo received other commissions in Venice.

Florence was stunned by the loss of a man so prominent. It was a fatal mistake, continues Machiavelli, to have left him alive with all his friends. Great men must either be tolerated or made away with. A letter to Cosimo from Agnolo Acciaiuoli, a prominent member of the Medici party, was intercepted, in which, after explaining the state of affairs, he urged him to stir up hostilities and also to come to terms with Neri Capponi. As soon as money was needed, there would be a universal call for Cosimo's return. Cosimo declared that the letter contained nothing of importance, but Agnolo was exiled, as were the three Pucci, Cosimo's loyal friends—so loyal that the members of the Medici party were often called Puccini. The defeat of the Florentine forces sent to help defend Romagna against Milan increased the discontent. Cosimo was, of course, badly missed in the business world.

Rinaldo had also acted foolishly in not having the old *borse* containing the names of those eligible for office destroyed, instead of merely adding a number of names of his own adherents. He abolished election by lot, but was forced by the general discontent to restore it after a year. The very first drawing in September, 1434, gave a Gonfalonier and several Priors favourable to the Medici. Rinaldo would have appointed another *balia*, thus once more suspending the constitution, but the influential Palla Strozzi objected. The new government made no secret of its sympathies. The outgoing Gonfalonier was imprisoned for peculation and arms and food were stored in the Palace. A plot to seize the Palace, raise the mob

and sack the houses of the Medici was betrayed. Rinaldo degli Albizzi, placing himself at the head of 600 men, encamped in the Piazza S. Apollinare behind the Palace, but the reinforcements upon which he counted failed to appear and some of the chief leaders hung back. Palla Strozzi put in an appearance only after being repeatedly sent for, unarmed and followed by a couple of men, then went home at once. But Rinaldo was formidable and the Signoria sought to negotiate, denying all intention of staging a revolution or recalling Cosimo. The effect of these mendacious declarations was to win over a number of waverers.

Pope Eugenius IV was now in Florence, having fled thither from Rome. Rinaldo had been among the most eager to offer him a refuge and instal him in S. Maria Novella and he now endeavoured to mediate. The powerful Cardinal Vitelleschi, who was said to be a warm friend of Cosimo, was sent as a go-between. Rinaldo's one chance was to attack at once, though he would probably have failed. Instead, he eagerly accepted the Pope's offer, placing absolute confidence in his promises and there was a lengthy conference in S. Maria Novella. Though Cavalcanti assures us that the tears the Pope shed at the sight of Rinaldo and his army were of the same vintage as those of the crocodile, there is no doubt that he was sincere. During the long wait outside, Rinaldo's followers, convinced that the trouble was over, gradually went home and laid down their arms. The Signoria sent for troops, summoned a parliament, formed a new *balia* and were soon complete masters of the situation, with the full support of the Pope, who may have hoped that the new government would help him and Venice against the Duke of Milan, towards whom the Albizzi had leanings. Vitelleschi was on the balcony when they asked for a *balia*. At the head of the deputation which escorted the Gonfalonier to thank Eugenius were Neri Capponi and Rinaldo's brother, Luca, who had married a Medici. The Medici were at once recalled

and Rinaldo degli Albizzi and his son banished in their stead. Rinaldo told the Pope that he was not surprised, but he bitterly regretted trusting his promises, since a man who could not help himself would never be able to help others.

Cosimo and Lorenzo had already left Venice when they heard the news. By October 5th they were at Pistoia, exactly a year after they had gone into exile : "I note this, because at the time of our banishment some good, loyal people told us that we should be recalled and back in Florence before the year was out. The whole population was at the gate to see us pass, fully armed, for we did not go into the Town. On the 6th we reached our villa of Careggi and dined there. . . . The Signori sent to tell us not to enter the city till we received orders to do so. At sunset the order came and we started with a large crowd." To avoid the crowd the brothers, with a single servant of the Commune, rode round the walls, thus entering the Palazzo della Signoria without attracting attention, for everyone was in the Via Larga, outside their palace. Here they spent the night. The story of their triumphal return, symbolized by the later fresco of the return of Cicero from exile at Poggio a Caiano, is purely mythical.

Cosimo expressed a desire that only the leaders of the Albizzi party should be punished and that justice should be tempered with mercy, but he appears to have done nothing to mitigate the sentences against those—some eighty in all—who were exiled or otherwise punished. Cavalcanti bursts into a chapter of indignation against such vindictiveness : there were even lunatics and babes in arms among the banished ; but when we consider the ferocious sentences that would have been passed in any other state of the peninsula, we can only be astonished at the moderation displayed. Many of the victims of the dictatorships that have succeeded the century of liberalism in Europe might envy their fate. There

was little vindictiveness about the unwarlike Flotentes of the Quattrocento : in this, as in so much else, Cosimo was a true son of his city : death sentences or other violent punishments shocked public opinion. But he was taking no risks. "Better a city destroyed than a city lost"—"You cannot hold a city with Paternosters" are among his recorded sayings, when he was blamed for ruining the city by the ruthless way in which he banished its ablest men. The *borse* were filled with names of his own supporters and the magistrates were appointed by special officials called *accoppiatori*, who were carefully chosen. He was determined to make his position secure. Like the great condottieri, like his friend Francesco Sforza, he was, thanks to his wealth and the power it gave him, both at home and abroad, too dangerous to serve. He had no armed force to hold down Florence and he knew the city too well to believe that it could be held by force. But he must dominate Florence, however unobtrusively, if he were to live there in peace, and he showed extraordinary wisdom and patience in the methods he adopted.

The Commune was an anachronism ; its days were past. A state like Florence, with its vast wealth, its subject cities and its complicated network of international relations, needed a strong central government, if it were to hold its own in the world around it. The very individualism that gave Florence her pre-eminence in commerce and in every form of art and literature, that made her the intellectual capital of the Western world, proved her undoing in the sphere of politics. The factions and jealousies which divided the oligarchy where all the leading men wished for first place paralysed the government. Cosimo had sprung from the people, to whom he had made himself necessary, and upon the people he must rely. But he also knew that, if he was to depend upon the people, he must create a special aristocracy of the people, absolutely devoted to his House, bound to it by the closest ties—

COSIMO

men of no political importance, but ready to serve him ; and, with their help, he must gradually transform the government into one suited to a strong modern state. Not that he formulated his ideas in a definite plan of action. Like many successful rulers, he was opportunist and empirical, moving with unerring instinct in the right direction, with no clear idea of the ultimate goal ; indeed, his methods differed little from those of the late oligarchy. Nor had he any belief in the permanence of his power. He used to say that he wished he had begun to build ten years earlier, because there would be nothing left of him or his family fifty years hence, except the little he had built. Here for once his cynicism was at fault. Even he might have felt a glow of pride had he seen the brilliant future that lay before his House.

There was no personal magnetism in Cosimo. He had none of the gifts of the popular leader or the successful general. But, says Vespasiano, he displayed the greatest ability in keeping his hold upon the state, always letting it appear that the things for which he was most eager came from others. Shunning publicity, especially as his gout and arthritis grew worse, he kept deliberately in the background. Such popularity as he won, apart from his intimates, came from his generosity and charity, his instinctive benevolence, except where his interests were concerned. Nothing is more characteristic of his caution than the care with which he avoided speaking evil of people, and he intensely disliked to hear such talk in his presence.

"Envy is a plant that should not be watered."

With the big men he could be ruthless, as we see from his treatment of Palla Strozzi, whom he could have saved, had he wished. Jealousy may have been at the bottom of it, for the high-minded Messer Palla possessed all his virtues with none of the faults which alone made Cosimo's position possible. Palla can hardly have been expecting the blow. Not only had he played no part in the banishing of Cosimo, had

never given Rinaldo more than a lukewarm support, but he had been active in securing Cosimo's recall. He was typical of the best of his class and therefore, of course, an enthusiastic scholar. It was he who paid most of the cost of bringing Chrysoloras to Florence to teach Greek in 1396. He also procured a number of Greek books from Constantinople, including Plutarch and Aristotle's *Politics*, at great expense; in fact, no one did more to lay the foundations of Greek scholarship in Italy. Leonardo d'Arezzo used to say that Messer Palla was the luckiest man of his age, a good Greek and Latin scholar—note that this comes first—possessed of great ability, strong of body and so handsome that even those who did not know him would have guessed who he was. He had the best-looking and worthiest children in Florence, to whom Tommaso Parentucelli, afterwards Pope Nicholas V, was tutor. His means were ample; he held every office of importance and won the respect of all those to whom he was sent on missions. His private character was blameless. More retiring even than Cosimo, he avoided the main streets when he went to the Palace, for he also held that envy should not be watered. His heavy taxes, which he conscientiously paid, proved too much for his ample means. Cosimo lent him large sums and, when a friend warned him that he might lose them, he had replied, with a laugh, that Messer Palla could have more if he wished. Palla insisted on paying all his creditors in full.

At first all went well, but the extremist committee appointed in November gave full vent to its spite, unchecked by Cosimo. It exiled Messer Palla among others to Padua for ten years. One thinks of Aristides and Socrates. Florence was the modern Athens in her faults as well as in her virtues. Palla consoled himself with the classics, more especially with Greek, never complaining and never saying a word against his country. Such conduct was not likely to placate his

enemies, who had no wish to see him back with the added halo of martyrdom. An exile could return only if he received thirty-four out of the thirty-seven votes in the Council. Though he was seventy-two at his second banishment, he was banished for another ten years, and then for another period of ten. He died in exile at the age of ninety-two, having outlived all his sons. His fate was typical. Hardly an exile was recalled during Cosimo's life and not one of any note.

The banishment of Palla Strozzi did the government no good. It served as a moral touchstone. It alienated a large body of public opinion. Agnolo Pandolfini, a great friend of Palla and a man of the same stamp, did not conceal his disgust. He had helped to recall Cosimo, who had great respect for him and often visited him, knowing the high esteem he enjoyed in Florence. But after the banishment of Palla he withdrew altogether from public life and refused to allow politics to be discussed by the distinguished guests whom he gathered at his beautiful villa.

The first years after Cosimo's return were honoured by the presence of Pope Eugenius IV in Florence. Brunelleschi's dome was finished in 1434, the year of Cosimo's return, and in 1435 the Pope consecrated the cathedral, renamed S. Maria del Fiore, in full state. A wooden platform was built all the way from S. Maria Novella, decked with the Pope's colours of blue and white and with boughs of olive, cypress and myrtle. It was carpeted and adorned with valuable hangings. Along it came the Pope in full pontificals with all the cardinals, prelates and officials in Florence, the Gonfalonier himself bearing his train. Was he wearing the mitre made for him by Ghiberti, with the beautiful little gold figures and the jewels valued at 38,000 florins?

While in Florence Eugenius reformed and reorganized a number of monasteries, among them S. Marco, which was given to the Dominicans and which he consecrated with hardly less solemnity than the

cathedral. S. Marco was built by Michelozzo, largely at the expense of his patron. The famous bookseller Vespasiano da Bisticci tells how Cosimo, whom he knew intimately, being concerned with the government of a city, had done many things that were against his conscience, as those who rule states and endeavour to get the better of others are bound to do ; and he knew that, if God were to show him mercy and keep him prosperous, he must perform acts of piety, for he was well aware that all his money had not been acquired by honest means. When Cosimo asked Pope Eugenius for advice, he suggested that he might, by way of expiation, spend 10,000 florins on S. Marco, in which he was interested. Cosimo spent more than 40,000 there before he had done and was rewarded with the right of the patronage of the church. He even supplied the choir with magnificent choir books, besides giving some 400 books from the library of Niccoli to the library. It was for this library that the future Pope Nicholas V drew up the regulations which became the model for other libraries, notably for that of Urbino. Cosimo had two cells reserved for himself in S. Marco, where he liked to spend a few days in converse with the monks and with the abbot, afterwards canonized as S. Antonino.

He also rebuilt the abbey at Fiesole, where the Prior was a friend of his, and here too he sometimes spent a few days in retreat. Vespasiano tells how one of his clerks, alarmed at his lavishness, informed him that he had spent 7,000 florins on the abbey and 5,000 on S. Lorenzo during the year. Cosimo replied that he quite understood. "The men at Fiesole deserve as much praise for their diligence as those at S. Lorenzo deserve blame for not doing more." It was for Fiesole that he gave Vespasiano *carte blanche* to provide an adequate library as soon as possible. These, however, form but a tithe of the works in which he was interested. He built a monastery in the Mugello al Bosco, near Cafaggiuolo, while his restorations and

other works extended from a hospice at Jerusalem to the Florentine college in Paris. One remembers that Benozzo Gozzoli shows us Cosimo and his family engaged upon the building of the Tower of Babel in the Campo Santo at Pisa. Yet he complained that he had never managed to spend enough to put God on the credit side of his ledger.

Cosimo began to build his new home in the Via Larga, now the Via Cavour, in 1430. This splendid palace, to-day the Palazzo Riccardi, was finished in 1440, the year in which he lost his brother Lorenzo, who appears to have been quiet and inoffensive. Eugenius IV sent the banner of the Church, as well as all the cardinals and prelates to the funeral. The humanist Filelfo ticked the Medici trio off as Cosimo the fox, Averardo the wolf, Lorenzo the cow and filled in the portrait by describing Lorenzo's dewlaps and other details. Cosimo had first thought of Brunelleschi for his palace, but found his design too pretentious for a simple citizen, and ended by choosing the more modest plans of Michelozzo. Not that he failed to recognize the superiority of the genius of Brunelleschi, whom he called the greatest architect he had ever seen, and he was careful to keep his friendship. Nevertheless, this princely palace, with its solid lower storey surmounted by the heavy cornice, so well suited for defence, and the graceful, light upper windows, watered the plant which Cosimo most dreaded and was continually used as a weapon against him by his enemies. It was far the best and most modern palace of its day in Florence, admirably suited to house the Great Merchant and his artistic and scholarly treasures, and symbolizing him not inaptly. In Cosimo's time the antiques and gems and manuscripts were of very great value, but at the death of his grandson the collections were unrivalled and one of the sights of Italy.

It was for the courtyard of this palace that Donatello made his David, so natural and lifelike and the flesh so



Photograph, Alinari

The Medici Palace (now Riccardi Palace) in the Via Larga
(now Via Cavour) Florence

soft, says Vasari, that it seems as if it must have been cast from the living flesh :—the first really successful and complete nude statue of the modern world. This was taken away by the Signoria during Cosimo's exile. For Cosimo, too, he did the group of Judith and Holofernes, as well as the medallions copied from classical antiques in the possession of his patron which still ornament the court above the columns, under the light, elegant windows.

Donatello's father, Niccolò di Betto Bardi, was a man of substance who had been ruined by supporting the Albizzi against the Medici. Donato, or Donatello, had begun as a goldsmith under Ghiberti's stepfather, and it was by working three days a week at this art that he supported himself in Rome with Brunelleschi, studying passionately the remains of ancient sculpture. He was indifferent to appearances. Cosimo was especially fond of him and he returned his affection, but he did not dress as well as Cosimo thought he should, so one feast day he sent him a *lucco*, a red Florentine cloak, and a cap, such as were worn by respectable citizens. Donatello appeared in them once or twice, then threw them aside in disgust, saying that such things were effeminate. Like his master, Ghiberti, he was commissioned to supply statues by the various guilds for Or San Michele and it was for the Guild of Armourers that in 1416 he made his noble St George, the first notable statue in his long career, which includes the first great equestrian statue of the modern world, the mounted figure of the condottiere Gattamelata at Padua.

Then there is Masaccio, whose brief life spans the first years of the century, for he died in 1429 at the age of twenty-seven, but who was yet the fountain-head of all progress, of all the modern movement in art. In the famous frescoes in the Brancacci chapel in the Carmine church at Florence the figures are treated with a dignity and breadth, combined with a realism and a knowledge of perspective that were completely

unknown till then—masterpieces, said Leonardo da Vinci, by which Masaccio shows "that those who take any other teacher than Nature, mistress of all masters, work in vain". His work was too novel to win recognition before his early death. His life was one of misery and hardship ; indeed, it was for his helplessness in all practical, worldly matters that Tommaso di Ser Giovanni di Simone Guidi was called Masaccio—awful Thomas. He, too, had worked with Ghiberti on the Baptistry doors. An intimate of Brunelleschi and Donatello, he applied the naturalistic methods they advocated to painting. In later painting, says Berenson, "we shall easily find greater science, greater craft and greater perfection of detail, but greater reality, greater significance, I venture to say, never". He left Florence for reasons that are not known and died in Rome, leaving the frescoes unfinished. But it was in the Brancacci chapel that a whole generation and more of great artists came to school, from Lippo Lippi, Verrocchio, Ghirlandaio and Botticelli to Leonardo and Michelangelo.

Cosimo's chief painters were both monks, the simple, primitive, profoundly religious Fra Angelico and that very different character Fra Lippo Lippi, whose landscapes are as irresistibly charming and appealing as his children or his winsome Madonnas. Fra Angelico had already made his mark as a painter while his order was still up at Fiesole, but it was after Cosimo had given the monastery of S. Marco to the Dominicans that he became famous. To him was assigned the task of decorating it with frescoes which make a unique appeal to the lover of religious art. It was said that he never took up his brush without offering a prayer, nor could he paint a crucifixion without tears in his eyes ; and his mystic, ecstatic world, like the saints that inhabit it, is one essentially his own. Cosimo commissioned him to paint the adoration of the Magi, the favourite subject of the Great Merchant, in the cell which he occupied at

S. Marco and where he would talk with the painter when he visited his friend the Prior.

Fra Angelico belonged in spirit to the age of Giotto, but Lippo Lippi was a wayward son even for the Renaissance, though he never quite lost the high ideals inspired in him by his early training. His story is interesting for the light it throws on the times and on the intimate relations that existed between the Medici and the artists they employed. Left an orphan, he was placed in the Carmine monastery at the age of eight, where he refused to learn anything. But he showed a talent for drawing, and was, after some training, placed under Masaccio, who was working in the chapel. His remarkable gifts developed rapidly. When it became obvious that he had not the temperament of a monk he left the Carmelites, becoming involved in an endless series of love intrigues. Cosimo gladly employed him, but his temperamental vagaries and escapades often sadly interfered with his work. He once had Lippi shut up in a room in his palace, telling him that he would not be let out till he had finished his job, but the painter made a rope of his sheets and disappeared for a long time on one of his wild adventures. When at last he returned, Cosimo treated him with the greatest consideration, saying that the gifts of genius are of divine origin and such men must not be treated like beasts of burden. Among the many pictures he painted for the Medici, who had some of his best work, are the delightful Madonna adoring the Child, commissioned by Contessina dei Bardi, and the picture of the angels, one of whom is said to be the little Lorenzo, in the Uffizzi.

Lippi could never keep a penny and was always in debt, often writing desperate letters to his patrons. They managed to procure him a benefice, in spite of his lapses, of which he was later deprived. They also obtained for him the chaplaincy to the Carmelite nunnery in Prato, where he took a house, as he was to

decorate the church there with frescoes. Here he fell in love with Lucrezia Buti, a beautiful girl who, with her sister, had been placed in the convent by her brother, as the easiest way of providing for them. Lippi was painting an altar-piece in the chapel and induced the abbess to allow her to be his model for the Virgin. He was now a man of fifty, but, with his long experience, he soon managed to persuade the young nun, who had no more vocation than himself, to elope with him. The occasion chosen was the great festival of the holy girdle at Prato, when it was easy for her to slip away in the crowd and the confusion. Her sister quickly followed her example, taking refuge in Lippi's house, where his son, the future painter Filippino, was born in 1457. Three other nuns did likewise. Later, all five were made solemnly to renew their vows and everything was done to hush up the scandal, but the two Buti sisters were soon back with Lippi. This escapade created much amusement in Florence. Cosimo's lively, attractive son, Giovanni, writes that he had laughed heartily over it. Lippi appealed to his patron and Cosimo managed to persuade Pope Pius II to release the pair from their vows and allow them to marry.

With a growing family Lippi's cares increased, for he did not become more provident and it was dangerous to pay him before he had finished a picture. All the contents of his studio were once seized by his creditors. We find him asking Giovanni dei Medici to send him money to buy gold for a picture which he was to paint for presentation to King Alfonso of Naples. When Carlo, the natural son of Cosimo, was made rector of Prato, he induced Lippi to finish his frescoes in the cathedral, which contain much of his best work.

CHAPTER III

THE COUNCIL OF FLORENCE. THE HUMANISTS

(1435-9)

IN 1435 the great condottiere, Francesco Sforza, came to Florence to consult the Pope. The Albizzi were stirring up Milan to war and Rinaldo said that the hen was sitting, to which Cosimo replied that hens do not hatch away from home. Cosimo was anxious to get Sforza, whose mother was a Florentine, into his service. The two men took to each other at once and from this meeting dates the genuine and almost unclouded friendship between them, which was all the closer because based upon common interests. Sforza consulted Cosimo in most of the crises of his career and Cosimo, true to his principles, was always ready to bind him to him by financing him. Sforza often refers to him as his quasi-father.

Cosimo's sympathies were still with Venice and Sforza was duly engaged. Cosimo was anxious to get possession of Lucca, which the exiles were using as a base of attack. It would bring him prestige and the spoils would enable him to gratify a number of his followers. But Lucca would rather starve than yield and Venice secretly encouraged its resistance. Cosimo himself went to Venice, thinking that his personal influence would enable him to triumph over the opposition, but to his surprise and chagrin, he received a rebuff which he never forgot or forgave, for Florence had supplied Venice liberally with money for her own objects.

Cosimo scored a great point in 1438 when he induced Pope Eugenius to bring to Florence the

Council to which he had summoned the Eastern Emperor and the Greek Church to discuss the possibility of union. Venice grumbled to her ambassadors that Florence wanted the Pope, the Council, Lucca ; the whole world would not be enough for her. Two years earlier Cosimo had made a move by offering to place twenty-five houses at the disposal of the Greeks and to raise his proffered subsidy from 70,000 florins to 100,000. The amenities of Florence were advertised in a thoroughly modern style. She was an orchard, abounding in wine, oil, corn and fruit, with more country villas than were to be found anywhere else. She had no need of a castle, since there were only some half dozen exiles of note, while she was of easy access by sea, whether from Pisa or Ravenna. However, the Pope preferred Ferrara and Cosimo showed his annoyance by lending the recalcitrant cardinals at Bâle, who were holding a Council against the authority of the Pope, a goodly sum.

But the Pope was nervous of his enemies at Bologna, as well as short of money ; finally the plague appeared and in 1439 he was back in Florence. He was soon obliged to pledge the castle of Assisi for the large sums advanced him by Cosimo. The Emperor Palaeologus received a splendid welcome, Cosimo having had himself elected Gonfalonier for the occasion : unfortunately a terrible February storm cleared the streets of spectators and soaked the principals to the skin. Palaeologus was lodged in the house of the exiled Peruzzi.

The Council met in S. Maria Novella and at last, thanks to a good deal of forcible persuasion, an agreement was reached. Though it was hollow and did not last, it was for the moment a great triumph for the Pope. At the final scene in the Cathedral Cardinal Cesarini read the terms in Latin and Besarion in Greek, after which they embraced ; then all the prelates, headed by Palaeologus, knelt before the Pope of a momentarily united Church. The majestic

Eugenius, whose glance was more than men of considerable character could face, possessed the dignity necessary for a scene so memorable.

Cosimo made large profits by acting as banker. It was he who supplied the sum with which Eugenius compensated his guests for not being able to provide them with the fleet and the army for war with the Turks, the promise of which had done not a little to fan the Emperor's enthusiasm for the union.

The importance of the visit of these cultivated Greeks to Florence at this time was very great. Vespasiano listened with admiration to the interpreter repeating the Latin speeches in Greek and vice versa. The Council did more to encourage Greek scholarship than any event before the fall of Constantinople. The leading scholars of both nations met frequently, often at the house of the wealthy Besarion, soon to be a cardinal, whom they also accompanied when he walked abroad, the talk ranging over every variety of subject. It was by the enthusiasm it awakened for Plato that the Council left its deepest mark. Besarion was an ardent Platonist, but Plato's most redoubtable champion was his aged master, Gemistus Plethon, who was an almost professed Pagan. The fire and enthusiasm of his lectures so impressed Cosimo that he determined to revive the Platonic Academy with Plethon at its head. It lapsed for a time when Plethon returned to Greece, but in 1462 Cosimo took Marsilio Ficino, the son of one of his physicians and a promising scholar with a strong philosophic bent, then aged twenty-nine, under his protection. He settled him in a villa called Montevacchio near Careggi and gave him some dialogues of Plato to translate. Marsilio in due course became the leading Platonist of the Renaissance.

Though the Council gave a fillip to Greek studies, Florence possessed a sufficiency of competent Greek scholars, who knew more of classical Greek than their visitors, as they were astonished to discover, for the

Greek Platonists were followers of Plotinus rather than of Plato. The sound Latin versions of several of the dialogues by Leonardo d'Arezzo might have given the Florentines a better idea of the master's thought than all the lectures of Plethon. But probably this was not what they wanted. The problem for that generation in thought, as in art, was how to reconcile this newly-discovered Pagan world with Christianity and for this Plotinus was more helpful than Plato.

In nothing did Florence then prove her right to be regarded as the intellectual capital of Italy more effectively than in her attitude towards Humanism. The new learning and its professors were generally treated with the utmost respect elsewhere in Italy, but most of the chief Florentine humanists came from the wealthy ruling bourgeoisie and many others of this class, without being professionals, were, like Cosimo, thanks to their admirable education and their enthusiasm, well able to hold their own in the company of the best of these scholars. It was among these and in the monasteries that Cosimo made his best friends. When Carlo d'Arezzo died, he told the Milanese ambassador how lonely he felt. The Florentines had ceased to be soldiers, nor were they, as a rule, keen sportsmen. It was to the classics that the hard-working merchants, generally such misers of their time, turned in their hours of leisure as the best means of counteracting the debasing effects of the struggle for money in the warehouse or for power in the councils and as the truest mental refreshment, just as they might turn to music or art to-day. "I lodati studi", the first words in Alberti's *Del Governo della Famiglia*, a treatise which sheds a vivid light upon the ways of these well-to-do merchant princes, are also for him the first among the accomplishments that bring honour to a family.

Florence was, on the whole, lucky in her humanists. Thanks to their position or to the generosity of the

Medici or others—for in this also the Medici were only following the fashion—they were generally placed above the temptations that brought out the worst characteristics of their fellows elsewhere.

For the men of the Quattrocento the rediscovery of the ancient world and above all of Greek was the most memorable achievement of the age, far more significant than the work of the great artists, highly though this also was valued. The resultant enthusiasm sometimes ran to excesses and absurdities. Thus Cosimo accepted the dedication of the *Hermapbroditus* of Antonio Beccadelli, better known as Panormita from his birthplace, Palermo, who had been the boon companion of Aeneas Silvius in their gay young days at Siena. The Latin epigrams deal with every form of vice with an openness which few of the ancients have ventured to use and created a great scandal. It was publicly burnt by S. Bernardino and denounced by many others. But it is only natural that such exaggerations of the new learning should be welcomed with equal exaggeration by the enthusiast as the true expression of the new spirit. The aged and wholly admirable educationalist, Guarino of Verona, was delighted with it, writing to tell Panormita of the honours bestowed in Verona upon an impostor who claimed to be the author.

A leading humanist with his mastery of Latin was thought to possess the power of conferring immortality or lasting infamy and, at a time when a Pagan desire for fame was a ruling passion, he was treated with a respect which it is difficult for us to understand. When the arrogant, grasping Leonardo Bruni d'Arezzo, Chancellor of the Republic, came stalking down of a morning to the booksellers' shops in all the dignity of his red robe sweeping the ground, there were always several foreigners waiting to catch a glimpse of him. Vespasiano once saw a Spaniard, an envoy from his king, fall upon his knees before him and at a time when scholarship stood so much

above par Bruni was not undeserving of his reputation. A self-made man, he was generally considered to be the best Latinist of his day, besides being one of the first Italians really to master Greek. The Signoria expressed its gratitude for his Latin History of Florence by exempting him and his children from taxation. He was carried to his grave with his history on his bosom. Manetti delivered the funeral oration, crowning his dead temples with a wreath of bay leaves as a lasting witness to his wonderful wisdom and inconceivable eloquence, a witness for the living and for future generations.

Niccolò de' Niccoli was the life and soul of the Florentine humanist movement. At the age of twenty-five, on the death of his father, a wealthy merchant, he found himself with a sufficient patrimony to leave the hated office and devote himself to scholarship. He spared neither expense, nor trouble to procure books from every part of the world, collecting a library of 800 volumes, an extraordinary number for that day. These he was always willing to lend; at his death there were 200 out on loan. He was also invariably the prime mover in inviting scholars of repute to Florence. Cosimo, "a dilettante, but with a heart for all that was ennobling or profound in thought", was his intimate friend. Niccoli could always interest Cosimo in any of his schemes and draw upon his purse, as he could for his own purchases. Vespasiano da Bisticci, the cultivated Florentine bookseller, whose lives are an invaluable source of information, was intimate with all these scholars. They foregathered in his shop, as they did in the Medici palace. He gives a pleasing picture of Niccoli, handsome, cheerful, always wearing a smile, a charming talker, dressed in a gown of the best red cloth of Florence—"panno di grano di S. Martino"—spotlessly neat and clean, seated at a table eating from an antique service with beautiful old cups and vases about him, and drinking from a goblet of

crystal. His snow white linen was always of the finest. Like his fellows, he was a passionate collector of antiques and medals, which his agents sent him. It is not surprising that he died heavily in debt to Cosimo, who was thus allowed by his fellow executors to dispose of his library. Niccoli wished it to be free to all and Cosimo therefore placed most of the manuscripts in the library he had built for S. Marco, though he kept some of the best as payment for the debt to himself.

Niccoli was touchy and suspicious and possessed of a violent temper, expecting to be treated with a deference which he was slow to show to others. He was Leonardo d'Arezzo's one friend, but they quarrelled when Messer Leonardo spoke disrespectfully of his faithful Benevenuta who kept house for him and on whose account Niccoli had broken with all his family. He is said to have carried her off from his brother, who loved her. Most of his friends were willing to tolerate his peculiarities; Poggio, for instance, or the saintly Frate Ambrogio Traversari, whose cell in S. Maria degli Angioli was another favourite meeting place of humanists. Cosimo and his brother often visited him there. Traversari was a good Greek scholar. Many of Niccoli's manuscripts are in his own fine hand, Frate Ambrogio writing in the Greek quotations for him. It was for Cosimo that Traversari translated the Lives of the Philosophers by Diogenes Laertius—Cosimo was always deeply interested in theology and philosophy—with many qualms of conscience, seeing that it was a secular book. Niccoli used to sharpen his wit at the expense of the monk's ecclesiastical studies, which, as a humanist, he scorned; but it was in his arms that he died. Such was Leonardo Bruni's jealousy when it was suggested that Frate Ambrogio rivalled him as the best Latinist of his day that he would have nothing more to do with him. These men were all editors or scholars possessed of little

creative ability, but doing valuable work with their enthusiasm and their example at a time when the ordering and digesting of the vast new material thrown open to the intellectual world was essential for the foundations of the new literature that was to arise.

There was more real creative ability in Poggio Bracciolini, whose beautiful handwriting enabled him to earn a living as a copyist when he first came to Florence with a few pence in his pocket. He was the oldest of Cosimo's humanist friends. The two had known each other since he came to Florence in the train of Pope John XXIII and they were together during the Council of Constance. It was then that Poggio made his reputation by discovering more manuscripts of unknown classical authors in the monasteries of Switzerland and Germany than have ever fallen to the bag of any other scholar. Though Poggio continued in the Papal service for many years, he died Chancellor of the Florentine Republic, a post then always given to a humanist. When Cosimo was in Rome in 1430, they went to Ostia together.

This was the world in which the famous scholar Filelfo found himself when he was invited to Florence to teach Greek, largely through the efforts of Niccoli, in 1429. His impressive appearance, with his Byzantine beard, and his lovely Greek wife, made him a notable figure and he was gratified to see that men and women made way for him in the street. His lectures were crowded, Bruni even was respectful and Niccoli charming. But his avarice and vanity quickly disgusted the Florentines as unworthy of a true scholar and his overweening conceit—he appears seriously to have regarded himself as superior to both Cicero and Virgil, because he was an orator as well as a poet and knew both Greek and Latin—afforded an irresistible target to their wit. Once, when he was reading one of his compositions at a literary gathering,

so far from listening with the unbounded admiration he expected, not only did Niccoli interrupt with criticisms, but he could not refrain from sharpening his wit upon the style. Filelfo retorted by calling him an ungrateful blockhead, because he had brought the hitherto obscure Niccoli fame by praising him in his letters. He published a satire against him, dedicating it, in spite of the good monk's protests, to Frate Ambrogio.

The fat was now fairly in the fire. All the humanists of Florence, except Leonardo d'Arezzo, became Filelfo's enemies, and Cosimo's answers, when they chanced to meet, were more cryptic than usual. The Florentine scholars persecuted him with an almost feminine pettiness. Poggio readily came forward to defend his friend Niccoli. He and Filelfo were a well-matched pair. For an unrivalled display of envy, malice, hatred and all uncharitableness, of evil-speaking, lying and slandering, commend me to the great humanists. They made no pretence to speaking the truth. Their only object was to go one better than the enemy and the dirtier the mud thrown, the louder was the applause. Their satires were Oriental in their thoroughness, embracing the whole family of the victim, notably his parents, his wife, and his female relatives. Filelfo was game, giving the hornets he had aroused even better than he got. Cosimo himself did not escape, being told not to put his trust in his wealth, but to remember Croesus. When Filelfo was attacked in the street by an assassin whom he beat off with a vigour worthy of his pen, he took it for granted that he had been sent by the Medici.

CHAPTER IV

COSIMO'S RULE

(1439-58)

MEANWHILE trouble was brewing. Rinaldo degli Albizzi said that the exiles were not asleep, to which Cosimo rejoined, "Yes, I have robbed them of sleep." But in the following year, 1440, the redoubtable condottiere Niccolò Piccinino, who was in the employ of the exiles, created much alarm by marching right up the Mugello. Cosimo did not appear at his best in a situation like this. There was no little panic and he offered to go into exile, if it were for his country's good; possibly he would not have been sorry to do so. Neri Capponi, the son of the conqueror of Pisa, Neri di Gino, as he is often called, showed his quality by driving back the invaders with such men as he could collect. He also appointed a special guard of a hundred men to protect Cosimo. The exiles wanted Piccinino to seize Pistoia, but no rising occurred and he threw away his chances by accepting the invitation of the Count of Poppi to invade the Casentino.

In the battle of Anghiari the Florentines and their Papal allies inflicted a crushing defeat on Piccinino, thanks to the foresight of the Papal commander, but they behaved with their usual want of discipline after the battle. Machiavelli, who had, quite justifiably, a poor opinion of his countrymen's discipline, was as amazed that such an army should have had the courage to win as that the enemy had been cowardly enough to let themselves be beaten by it. After this Neri Capponi easily conquered the Casentino. Meanwhile Rinaldo degli Albizzi, "in order to win a

country in Heaven, since he had lost his earthly country ", went off to the Holy Land, dying suddenly on his return during the wedding feast of one of his daughters.

Cosimo was not too pleased at Neri's success, which made him a hero in the public eye and emphasized his own shortcomings. In civil life Neri acted as a moderating influence on the more violent Mediceans, such as Luca Pitti or Pucci, whom Cosimo could trust to go as far as he wanted and use to do work which he preferred not to do himself. Cosimo often snubbed Neri by opposing his suggestions in small matters and by encouraging opposition to him from the hot-heads. Neri saw through these manœuvres, but he was too sensible to court political ruin by opposing his chief, so he took no notice.

Neri was intimate with Balduccio d'Anghiari, a capable condottiere with a reputation rather worse than most of his kind. One day the Gonfalonier, who had been openly upbraided by Balduccio for his cowardice at the battle of Anghiari, summoned him to the Palace. He was chatting with him as they strolled up and down his room, when, at a given signal, a number of armed men suddenly fell upon him, wounding him mortally, and flung his body out of the palace window. The real reason for this violence, which, though not uncommon elsewhere, was almost unknown at Florence, appears to have been that Balduccio had accepted the liberal offers of Pope Eugenius, who wanted him to drive Sforza out of the Romagna. It was long before the Pope forgave the Florentines. The murder caused much talk : it was suggested that Cosimo hoped in this way to humiliate Neri, who was on a mission to Venice. It may also have had this effect, for Neri dropped out of public life for a couple of years ; but when he reappeared, he was on the best of terms with Cosimo.

Another instance of cruelty is the treatment of the wife of an exiled Gianfigliazzi. While at Siena she

heard that her son was ill at Bologna and ventured to go through Florence disguised as a pilgrim. When he was better, she came back in order to nurse her daughter-in-law, who was ill in Siena, but when she reached Florence she was denounced, seized, cruelly tortured and thrown into the *Stinche*, the prison where Cavalcanti whiled away the long years of his confinement by writing his history. He saw her brought in, supported by a couple of police officers, and placed among the prostitutes. His indignation is a tribute to the humanity of his countrymen.

Now it was that Cosimo, feeling himself firm in the saddle, began to tighten the reins. As usual, he kept himself as much as possible in the background. He preferred raising men from the lower classes to the positions held by the great families he had exiled. When protests were made against this policy, he answered that a couple of yards of red cloth would make a good citizen of Florence. In this he was true to family tradition and it was admitted that he chose his men well. Doubtless his business experience served him here. He also professed to restore their rights to the old noble families by enrolling them among the people, but they were rarely elected to office. Though he continued to control the elections, he was careful to increase rather than weaken the state and the authority of the various magistrates. That powerful judicial body, the *Otto di Guardia*, who were always friends of the Medici, enabled them to extend their influence over the administration of justice.

Cosimo was determined to keep finance and foreign affairs, two spheres in which a genuine democracy fumbles most hopelessly, in his own hands. In finance he always remained a Commissioner of the Monte Comune, as the national debt of Florence was called. Even his enemies confess that, on occasion, he gave liberally out of his own purse to the state revenues, though they added, probably untruly, that

he received more than he gave. It was said that the boxes with the receipts from the Customs were taken straight to his house. But there was often a powerful opposition and in 1446 he only just managed to retain his place on the board. Such was his influence that, when the Government refused to indemnify him by a special tax for 30,000 florins which he had lent to the ever-impecunious Sforza, he got a law passed authorizing the Commissioners of the Monte to ensure the payment of all debts to the Commune, thus securing the money advanced.

The Great Merchant, who could shake the credit of states like Milan and Venice by calling in his loans, turned to finance as the best weapon against his enemies. By this time the *catasto*, always unpopular with big business, was virtually a dead letter. It was not reassessed and the friends of the Medici were making large profits. Citizens behind with their taxes, though creditors of the state, were forced to pay their arrears and, unless Medici men, found it hard to get their debts honoured. By buying up these claims cheap, Puccio Pucci, who started as a silk mercer in a small way, made 54,000 florins in seven years. The assessments of the *catasto*, being quite arbitrary, pressed heavily on the enemies of the government. Many persons retired to their villas, where the assessments were lighter. The Medici kept the stick of the taxes in their own hands, says Guicciardini, but Cosimo deserves praise for preferring it to the dagger.

The most notorious instance of the abuse of taxation is the case of Giannozzo Manetti, a spiritual brother of Palla Strozzi. As ambassador he won an extraordinary reputation for the elaborate speeches then popular. Alfonso of Aragon, King of Naples, and Pope Nicholas V were spellbound by them. Such was the impression that he once made in Rome that the Venetian ambassador wrote home imploring his government to send someone at least as eloquent for

Visconti, and when the old Duke died, Cosimo urged Sforza to think of nothing but Lombardy. The Venetians were able and, if he was not quick, might do him a deal of damage. Cosimo sent all the money he could raise, but the ravages of the Neopolitan forces, which advanced close to Florence, combined with a bad harvest, made the cause of Sforza unpopular. He was a drain rather than a help to his allies. By 1449 Nicodemo tells Sforza that Cosimo is his only friend and that he had served him splendidly. In the following year Sforza was made Duke of Milan. Public opinion gradually veered round to Cosimo's view and he thus established something like a balance of power between the chief Italian states.

Luck continued to favour the allies, Milan and Florence. In 1447 their enemy Eugenius IV died and was succeeded by Tommaso Parentucelli, or Tommaso di Sarzana, a humanist of note and a friend and protégé of Cosimo, as Nicholas V. When poverty had compelled him to leave the university of Bologna, he had come to Florence, where he earned sufficient money to continue his studies by acting as tutor in the families of Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Palla Strozzi. Having obtained his degree, Tommaso returned to Florence in the service of Cardinal Albergati. After escorting his patron home he would sally forth on his mule, dressed in simple blue, with a couple of servants, to join in the discussions of the humanists, Poggio, Aurispa, Manetti and the rest, under the Tetto dei Pisani, where they foregathered. The bright-eyed, hot-tempered little man was very vehement. He could no more brook contradiction in argument than a moment's delay in carrying out his orders by his servants. Not only was he a good scholar, but he was witty and eminently clubbable, knowing how to make himself welcome in any company. Eugenius IV said that he was inferior to no one in the Roman Republic in its best days; praise could hardly go further in the Quattrocento. Cosimo, with his unerring eye for a

man, bound him to him by his usual methods. He allowed Tommaso all the money for which he asked, for he received nothing from his See of Bologna, which had revolted from the Pope. Apart from political advantages, he reaped his reward by becoming the banker of the new Pope. During the Jubilee of 1450 he had 100,000 florins through his hands.

In 1451 Venice and Naples sent an embassy to Florence to protest against Cosimo's change of front. Cosimo judged the occasion of sufficient importance to defend his policy in a set speech. He was not much of a speaker in those days of elaborate oratory, but for once he made a real impression. Florence now appealed to Charles VII of France, who promised help if either Florence or Milan were attacked before 1453. This closer connection with France favoured Florentine financial interests there at the expense of Venice. The arrival of the Emperor Frederic III in Italy had a pacifying effect. In Florence he was welcomed royally and lodged at S. Maria Novella, though, with his 1,500 horsemen and his empty purse, he proved an expensive guest. Aeneas Sylvius, soon to be Pope Pius II, was his Chancellor.

On the departure of Frederic, war between the two leagues began, but Charles was too busy at home to intervene. The Neapolitans did appalling damage to the Tuscan countryside with their plundering, but the only result of the campaign was the capture of a couple of small villages. "Really, and where is Rencine?" asked Cosimo of an excited Florentine who informed him that the village had fallen. The arrival of René d'Anjou, who claimed the throne of Naples, brought relief. The Neapolitans were driven back and there was no more trouble about funds. The fall of Constantinople increased the general desire for peace, which was made in 1454.

This Peace of Lodi was eminently satisfactory to Florence. Cosimo now became the dominating factor in Italian politics, the key of which was his

alliance with Milan. He told Nicodemo more than once that he regarded Sforza as his god in this world, but pointed out that he had run great risks for his sake. He was hurt and disappointed that, though master of Milan, Sforza would not help him capture Lucca, as he had promised. Cosimo wanted something to set against Pisa. Such additions as he had made to Florentine territory were only purchases. Sforza was expected to do the fighting while Cosimo found the money, and Cosimo generally had the harder task. But to no one, not even to Pope Pius II, did Ferrante of Naples owe his accession to the throne of Naples on the death of his father, Alfonso, more than to Francesco Sforza. Florence had always been Angevin in sympathy and it was long before the Duke of Milan could convince Cosimo of the danger of giving the French a permanent footing in Italy.

Cosimo could now feel as secure as it was possible for him to be, but this very security only served to increase the restlessness among his followers and there has come to light an interesting proof of the feeling against some of his methods¹ in the very heart of his party. It is true that the first article of the association formed in 1449 binds the members to support the existing régime, but they also pledge themselves to secure a just assessment of taxes, the giving of office to merit and other similar reforms. Among the sixty-four signatories are Luca Pitti, Dietisalvi Neroni and Antonio Pucci. There is, however, no sign that they attempted to put their ideas into practice and it is quite possible that Cosimo knew all about them. When, in 1455, a large majority favoured a return to election by lot, Cosimo made no objection ; the *borse* were still filled with the names of his friends. But his intimates soon discovered that they had lost their monopoly of the higher offices. Men even spoke disrespectfully of them in the streets and the Florentines had sharp tongues. The

¹ Niccolini. *Chronicles of a Florentine Family*, p. 206.

speedy restoration of the old system was most popular.

The death of Neri Capponi was a blow to the party. Neri, says Machiavelli, had many friends, but few partisans, whereas Cosimo had sufficient of both. So long as they worked together, all went well, for they were as strong as they were popular. Cosimo had been making more and more use of Luca Pitti, who was an ideal figure-head, while he pulled the strings. Luca did not possess sufficient brains to be a dangerous rival. He was impulsive, reckless of consequences, open and energetic: there was no warmer-hearted friend in Florence, and he had worked enthusiastically to secure the return of the Medici from exile.

In 1458 the new Signoria decided upon the long-overdue revision of the *catasto*. The proposal filled the Medici party with consternation, since they would be compelled to pay taxes on the large sums they had netted. Their methods may have been shady, but in this they differed little from members of a dominant party, elsewhere in Italy, or, for that matter, in the world of to-day. They begged Cosimo to intervene, but he preferred to take the opportunity of letting his supporters feel his power for once by refusing. He expressed himself as perfectly willing, but said he could do nothing against the law. The whole story soon became public property, says Nicodemo, "because democratic states cannot be governed with the discretion and secrecy that are desirable". Similarly Cosimo declined to come into the open by allowing a new *balia* to be appointed. But it was, of course, with his permission that Luca Pitti was made Gonfalonier towards the end of the year. Luca proposed the destruction of the existing *borse* and the restoration of the old methods of election, on the plea that the disturbed state of Italy threatened danger to the Commune.

No one was more intimate with Cosimo at this time than the Milanese envoy Nicodemo Trinchedini, and

it is clear from his dispatch that everything that followed had been carefully planned beforehand. Cosimo whipped the whelps in order to frighten the lions, as he puts it, and they at once promised to be good. When Girolamo Machiavelli denounced any attempt to destroy the liberties of the people, he was arrested with a few others of no importance, who were tortured and imprisoned—"Cosimo acts with great caution and likes to appear neutral. Cosimo stayed at home with a strong guard and arms and armour that must have cost a fortune: no one else in Italy has such a supply." Troops were called into the city and a *balia* appointed in the time-honoured way with the widest powers. Cosimo ran no more risks. A new Council of One Hundred made up of his supporters was added to the overloaded constitution with the principal duty of appointing the *Accoppiatori*, who once again chose the magistrates.

CHAPTER V

COSIMO'S LAST YEARS (1459-64)

FOR the rest of his life there was no possible doubt concerning Cosimo's position. In 1459 Pope Pius II visited Florence on his way to Mantua, whither he had summoned a Council of the Italian Powers to organize a Crusade, the darling wish of his life. "He is an old man trying to do the work of a young one," commented Cosimo. The Florentines had no more intention of going on a Crusade for the recovery of Constantinople than the Venetians, who said, "We are Venetians first and then Christians", or, for that matter, than any other Power. In 1455 Florence had sent an embassy to thank Mahomed II, the conqueror of Constantinople, for his treatment of her merchants and request him in the most respectful terms to give them free access to his dominions.

To Florence came to meet the Pope the heir of Francesco Sforza, Galeazzo Maria, then a lad of sixteen, who made a most favourable impression, on none more than on His Holiness. Cosimo welcomed him in the chapel of his palace, as yet unadorned by Gozzoli's frescoes, embracing him and "moved almost to tears by joy and affection", while his little grandsons Lorenzo and Giuliano recited verses in praise of him and his father. There is a delightful boyish enthusiasm about Galeazzo's letters :—". . . a house that, for the beauty of the ceilings, the height of the walls, the finish of the doors and windows, the number of rooms and halls, the well-furnished studies, the impressiveness of the books, the charming, pretty gardens, the tapestry decorations, the chests of rare

workmanship and the variety and quantity of valuable plate " is the most beautiful in the world.

Cosimo treated the son of his old friend so intimately that he allowed the women to remain in the room with him. As a rule in Florence they saw only the males of their own family, rarely leaving the house, except to go to mass. One of his grand-daughters played to Galeazzo every day, " which was very pleasant to hear ". Careggi and its gardens fill him with no less enthusiasm. The whole family sits down to table, except Piero, who looks after the guests. Then comes music and a poet without a rival in the world sings his praises. Neither Lucan, nor Dante could have bettered some of his comparisons. The verses were, as one would expect, " a mixture of ancient history and fable, with a number of names of poets and all the Muses ". Then the ladies danced, among them Piero's wife and Giovanni's wife and others, not the stately measures of the day, but in the popular Florentine style, with capers and hops, like Nencia in Lorenzo's poem. When young Sforza got back, he found two messengers who presented him with a parrot, a monkey and a cat.

Cosimo spent a fortune on entertaining his distinguished guests. The festivities were better suited to Galeazzo Maria than to the aged Pope, who was duly lodged at S. Maria Novella. The boy was given a handsome service of silver plate worth 1,800 ducats. There was a splendid joust by the light of three hundred torches on the Piazza S. Croce. The hunt on the Piazza della Signoria is one of the first on record. Not only were there wolves and bears, horses and dogs, as well as the giraffe sent by the Bey of Tunis : even the lions, always kept in Florence, whose beast was a lion, the Marzocco, were brought through carefully boarded streets ; but they were so terrified by the noise of the crowd that they behaved " like angels " and gave poor sport. The Bey of Tunis had also sent Francesco Sforza in Milan a

number of animals, including a camel and some lions. The camel, shut up in a room, proved extremely troublesome. At last Sforza sent the whole menagerie to Cosimo, possibly as a small return for money lent. The conveying of the lions upon mules over the Apennines was an exciting business.

Finally there was a military parade, in which the boys of the leading Florentine families took part, dressed in doublets ornamented with silver and pearls and carrying lances. They were preceded by a great standard bearing the device of a golden falcon on the wing caught in a net, the crest of the little Lorenzino di Piero dei Medici, then aged eleven, who came last, preceding a gilded car drawn by a pair of richly caparisoned horses. In the centre was the god of Love, a naked boy, and round him were grouped other boys with lanterns on sticks. Afterwards there was tilting at the Saracen. It would be hard to imagine a more fitting entry upon the Florentine scene for Lorenzo il Magnifico.

The festivities were saddened by the death of the Archbishop of Florence, soon to be deservedly canonized as S. Antonino, an attractive figure, whose asceticism, deep, simple piety and charity stand out amid the widespread corruption of the Church.

In his charming memoirs, with their exuberant enthusiasm and enjoyment of all that came to his notice, Pius II gives us a characteristic glimpse of Cosimo. He was not Gonfalonier for the occasion, probably on account of his health. Pius notes that his gout—or rather arthritis—was so bad that he could not rise or attempt to kiss his feet. He is richer than Croesus. “He it is who decides peace and war and controls the laws, being not so much a citizen as the master of the country; political questions are settled at his house; the men he chooses hold office. He is king in everything but name and ceremony. Such is his influence that everything is referred to him. He is unassuming to a degree, being accompanied by

only one servant when he walks abroad, giving the wall to older men or to men on horseback and showing the utmost deference to the magistrates." He knew everything that was going on in Italy, where "most of the cities and princes took his advice. Nor was he less well informed from abroad, since his business correspondents sent him all the news."

We get the same impression from Nicodemo, who was so intimate that Cosimo would discuss politics with Dietisalvi just as if he were not present. As time went on, Cosimo was confined more and more to bed. He used his health as an excuse for avoiding troublesome duties. He would decline an inconvenient appointment on the ground that he had taken physic. Nicodemo shows him in bed, at times in the room of Piero, who suffered hardly less than his father from the family malady, giving his decision after a long talk with Luca Pitti and Dietisalvi, or cutting short all debate by speaking first. Nicodemo never troubled to go to the regular magistrates : their two months of office were not long enough for them to have any real power. In his instructions to an envoy (April 21st, 1457) Sforza tells him to see Cosimo ; then, if Cosimo thinks it wise, he will see the Signori, saying more or less to them about the matter in hand according as Cosimo advises. Nicodemo tells Sforza that ambassadors do not speak with individuals, except as it pleases "his Magnificence". In 1458 he writes : "When you want anything special, write privately to Cosimo, stating your views and wishes ; he will always carry them out ; do not hesitate. Popular governments are very different from others. Cosimo cannot always be at the Palace, as he used to be." Cosimo was everything at Florence and Florence nothing without him, wrote a diarist ; and though a good citizen should not desire to be more than the whole Republic, yet such was his power that he had no rivals.¹

¹ Perrens, I, 169-70.

To all intents and purposes Cosimo's power was as great as that of Sforza in his Duchy of Milan and he had fewer enemies. Over his party it was absolute. His manner of doing things shows him to be the true son of Giovanni di Bicci. His favourite device was the three feathers, with the motto, *Semper*, on the diamond ring, symbolizing his three favourite virtues, prudence, temperance and fortitude, bourgeois qualities which were admirably suited to the government of Florence. The acid touch of irony that ran through Cosimo must have made his methods peculiarly congenial to him. He was always polite, perfectly self-controlled, and quite unfathomable. "Dress in red and don't talk," was his advice to a chattering fellow-countryman who was going as Podestà to a foreign city.

Cosimo's success, his enviable efficiency, won the profound admiration of men like Machiavelli and Giucciardini. Machiavelli refuses to apologize for writing of him rather as a biographer than as a historian in his history of Florence. A man so extraordinary deserves to be praised in an extraordinary way. He was worthy to exercise the authority he possessed in Florence and throughout Christendom.

"For his great position, since he was chief of the city for thirty years," says Giucciardini, "for his prudence, his wealth and his magnificence he had a reputation such as probably no private citizen has ever enjoyed from the fall of Rome to our own day. Yet he lived at home like a private citizen and as a civilian, managing his vast possessions and his business, in which he was so successful that there was not a man who worked with him as partner or manager who did not grow rich." Like his father, Cosimo loved his business. He used to say that, if everything necessary to life and its adornment could be produced by a magic wand, he should none the less continue to work to increase his property: it is the first of all duties to promote that which serves as a bond of union

among men and helps to bring glory to one's country.

Yet enemies he had and it was his wealth even more than his power that watered the plant he dreaded. We have a vivid picture of the way in which the sharp tongues wagged against him,¹ especially about the sums he lavished upon Sforza. The money he laid out on building also afforded a good target. "This hypocrisy, full of ecclesiastical pride, is paid for out of our purses and the Count [i.e. Sforza] serves as a pretext. He has filled even the privies of the monks with his balls ; and now there is nothing more to build for them, he has begun a palace which throws the Colosseum of Rome into the shade. Who would not build magnificently, if he could do it with other people's money ?" There was grumbling about the wars, about Cosimo's absolutism, but, adds Cavalcanti, who is often distinctly anti-Medici in his second volume, they forgot how often he had come to the rescue of the Commune with far larger sums. One night the doors of Cosimo's palace were smeared with blood, an outrage which awakened no little indignation in Florence. It must be confessed that his ecclesiastical benefactions seem rather to be erected to the glory of his House than to that of the Church or for the expiation of his sins.

Cosimo took these outbursts very calmly. After the *balia* of 1453 the fatuous Luca Pitti began to suffer from swelled head. He was solemnly knighted by the people and anyone who wanted anything had only to supply him with materials for the huge palace that was being built for him on the other side of the Arno by Brunelleschi. As Cosimo was so often confined by illness, Luca seemed to many, and doubtless to himself, to be the head of the state. Ammirato says that he took a mortar firing the Medici balls for his crest. It was probably he for whom Cosimo sent when he heard that he was abusing him and said :

¹ Cavalcanti, II, 210.

■ You aim at the infinite, I at the finite : you stretch your ladder to the sky, I plant mine firmly upon the earth so as not to risk falling by stretching it too far. If I want the glory of my House to stand higher than yours, it seems only just and fair that I should push my own fortunes more energetically than yours. You and I are like two big dogs. When they meet, they sniff each other ; then, as they both have teeth, each goes his own way."

There is much of Cosimo in the story, even a touch of the slowness which Nicodemo notes in him and which Cosimo knew how to make serve him on occasion. He could afford to allow the malcontents a good deal of rope. They were neither strong enough nor able enough to be dangerous and he took care that most of them should be under financial obligations to him. "O city for sale, if only a buyer could be found", was wittily and not unfairly applied to the Florence of that day, which Cosimo was controlling more and more by his money-bags. He also made friends by dowering poor girls and by arranging marriages, which were then purely matters of business. Luca da Panzano relates how, one day, Giovanni di Cosimo sent for him and said that he wanted to give his son to a daughter of one Fabrini, "a good merchant, a good citizen and a friend of the government". Luca took the suggestion as a command and gladly consented.

As he grew older and his health worse, Cosimo became more difficult and he had to leave more to others. Nicodemo shows us father and sons all ill in bed with gout together, their tempers none of the best. Dietisalvi Neroni was often abusing him. Cosimo and his family, wrote Nicodemo in 1464, had no greater or more ambitious enemy. "I am hand in glove with Dietisalvi and with all of them and I am well aware of the harm this letter might do me."

In 1463 died Cosimo's younger son, Giovanni, at the age of forty-two, shortly after his infant son,

Cosimo, called Cosimino. This was a severe blow, for he was abler than Pietro and enjoyed better health. He was very popular. Francesco Sforza was especially fond of him. He hastened his end by his fondness for good living. When he was on a mission to Rome a friend warned him that Cosimo was not pleased at his dining so much with cardinals, with whom he would have to sit long at table and eat and drink too much. Admirably educated and with a number of scholars and artists among his acquaintance, he was lively and liked gay friends. The bust by Mino da Fiesole gives him, one feels, to the life. We find him being implored not to stay out too late and keep his mother waiting for him at the window. He appears to have annoyed Cosimo by his disobedience and a friend once advised him to keep away from home for a time, or he would find himself married at once. He was a careless husband, his wife, Ginevra degli Alessandri, finding it as impossible to induce him to write to her when away from home as his mother. The contrast between father and son comes out well in the story of a villa Giovanni was building on a steep slope. Cosimo disapproved, because the land was poor and the expense would be great. Giovanni said he liked the view. Cosimo replied that there was no better view than that from Cafaggiuolo—a characteristically enigmatic remark, which was beyond Giovanni, till Cosimo explained that it lay low and that from there everything he could see belonged to the Medici.

Cosimo was not the man to succumb to such a blow, though he exclaimed sadly, as he was carried through his great palace, that it was too large a house for so small a family. The spirit in which he faced his loss is eminently characteristic of the Renaissance. Nicodemo says he "quoted stories and texts from the psalms, the prophets, the philosophers and the gentiles. He comforted us better than I had been able to comfort him. Meantime Nones sounded. He repeated them with wonderful fervour. Then he



Giovanni di Cosimo, by Mino da Fiesole
Museo Nazionale, Florence

Photograph, Atlanri

prayed God that, if it was His will to take Giovanni from him, He would put an end to his own suffering while his son was still alive ; all this without a sigh or a tear. It might have been Job at the death of his son.”¹ Pius II bade Cosimo submit to the will of God. He is sincerely sorry, not merely because the death of Giovanni was untimely, but because it will be dangerous to Cosimo’s age and health. “It is for the good of ourselves, your country and the whole of Italy that you should live as long as possible.”

Cosimo also had a son, Carlo, by a slave-girl, probably the Circassian bought by Portinari, his agent in Milan, at Venice in 1427. She was named Maddalena and cost 60 ducats, age about twenty-one, a virgin, sound of limb and free from disease, as the bill of sale puts it. There were a number of these slave-girls in Florence. They begin to appear after the ravages of the plague, as a help towards solving the servant problem, which had become acute. They were bought largely at Venice, the chief port for the East. As a rule they were anything but attractive and often troublesome and idle, yet their masters frequently had children by them. Their position was regulated by law, but the embracing of Christianity did not bring them their liberty. Alessandra Strozzi has not a good word to say for them and her maternal jealousy is roused when she hears of her exiled sons in Naples acquiring one. She preferred Tartars, as stronger and better able to stand hard work, though she admits the Circassians were nicer-natured and better-looking. Carlo took orders, becoming Rector of Prato and a Protonotary Apostolic. In his portrait at Prato he has a distinctly Russian look. He was well educated and had scholarly tastes. In Rome he bought coins and manuscripts for Cosimo, who urged him to translate the letters of Phalaris into Latin, which shows that he knew Greek well. We also find him correcting and emending manuscripts.

¹ Perrens, I, 212.

COSIMO'S LAST YEARS

Cosimo possessed four other female slaves whom his son Piero records as present at his funeral.

As his health grew worse Cosimo spent more and more time at Careggi. He had the fondness of the Florentine, or, for that matter, of the London business man, for country life. A prosperous Florentine merchant had his office, his town mansion and his villa, which was often far more magnificent than his house in town. Cosimo's four villas, Cafaggiuolo, the Villa Medici under Fiesole, Trebbio and Careggi, were all enlarged or rebuilt by Michelozzo. Machiavelli thought them more suited to a king than to a private citizen. Careggi, only two miles outside Florence, was the real home of the family. In all that concerned agriculture Cosimo was something of an expert, a fact which endeared him to the peasantry. His estates were a valuable source of income and he looked after them as carefully as his business. He himself superintended the laying out of the garden of the monastery of S. Marco. He liked to graft and to prune his vines himself. Having gone to Careggi to escape the plague one February, he spent the first two hours of the day pruning his vines, then came in and read S. Gregory's *Moralia*. He was possessed of an amazing memory in all things and we are told that there was not a graft on his estates that he did not remember.

It was in his old age that he turned more particularly to philosophy and theology. The Platonic Academy often met at Careggi, where he had given Ficino a house. We find him writing to him: "I have come to Careggi to cultivate not my land, but my mind. Come to me, Marsilio, as soon as you can. Bring with you Plato's book about the highest good, which you have, as you promised, translated from Greek into Latin. I desire nothing more than to know the surest way to happiness. Farewell and come not without the Orphic lyre." And in a letter from Ficino to Lorenzo we learn that they read the

Philebus shortly before he died. During the last year of his life he had Aristotle's Ethics, which Acciaiuoli had annotated at his request, read to him. Clearly he was anxious to learn all that the ancients had to teach about the great fundamental problems of human life and destiny. As the end approached he became more and more thoughtful and abstracted. One day his wife asked him why he sat so often with his eyes shut. "To get them accustomed." Similarly, when she asked him why he was so silent, he answered, "When you are going to the country, you are busy for a whole fortnight getting ready. Now that I must leave this life for another, are you surprised that I am thoughtful?" His health was completely broken. "Nico-demo mio, I can bear no more; I feel myself failing and am ready to go," he said some two months before the end; and five weeks later, towards sunset, he began to deplore the miseries of life to Ficino and to denounce the evil of men, saying that he looked upon death as a release.

The following letter describing the last illness of Cosimo was written by Piero from Careggi to his sons at Cafaggiuolo, on July 26th, 1464:

"I wrote to you the day before yesterday, telling you that Cosimo was worse. I think he is sinking and he is of the same opinion. So on Tuesday evening he ordered everyone out of the room but Monna Contessina [his wife] and myself.

"First he described his whole life, then he went on to speak of the government of the city and then of its trade, then of the management of the family property and of the affairs of you two, taking comfort that you had brains. He said that I must bring you up well, as you would be a great help to me. Two things he regretted, that he had not done all that he wished and that he might have done, and that he was leaving me in poor health and with so much trouble on my hands. Then he said that he should not make a will and that he had never meant to make one, even when Giovanni

was alive, because he saw that we were united in love and mutual esteem ; and when it was God's will so to order things, he wished for no pomp or display at his funeral. He reminded me where he wished to be buried in S. Lorenzo. He said everything so methodically and wisely and with such courage that it was astonishing, adding that he had enjoyed a long life and it had been such that he was quite ready to depart when it should please God. Yesterday morning he rose and dressed completely. . . . He confessed to the Prior of S. Lorenzo and heard Mass, making the responses like a man in perfect health. Then, being questioned about the articles of faith, he answered correctly and took the sacrament with all possible devotion, after asking pardon of everyone. All this has increased my courage and my hope in Messer Domeneddio, and though according to the flesh I am grieved, yet, seeing the greatness of his soul and his good disposition, I am almost resigned that he is approaching the end we must all reach. Yesterday he was pretty well and he passed a good night, but, considering his great age, I have not much hope of his recovery. Have prayers said for him by the friars of Il Bosco and see that alms are given as it seems good to you, praying God to leave him with us for a time, if it be for the best. And do you, who are young, take example and bravely shoulder your share of trouble, since God wills it, and see that you play the man, though you are but boys, since your position and circumstances demand it. Above all look to everything that can do you honour and help you, because the time has come when you must rely on yourselves. Live in the fear of God and hope for the best. I will write to you about Cosimo. We are hourly expecting a doctor from Milan, but I put my trust in God rather than in anything else. No more at present."

Sforza had at once sent off his own doctor, though he was in attendance on his wife, who was ill. Cosimo died on August 1st and was buried next day in

S. Lorenzo, where his grave is marked by a slab of porphyry in front of the choir. His funeral was as simple as possible, but naturally all persons of note in Florence were present. Nicodemo pronounced an oration when the body was in front of the family palace. A special decree was passed and adopted by acclamation, conferring upon him the title of *Pater Patriae*, the title which appears upon his tomb and which he richly deserved. He greatly increased the prestige of Florence and, says Machiavelli, with his luck and his wisdom, all his allies and those of Florence prospered, while his enemies lost time, money and state. He had done all he could to encourage agriculture and trade, seeing that the channel of the Arno was kept navigable, sending ships to the Northern seas and the coast of Africa and entering into negotiations with the Turks.

CHAPTER VI

PIERO IL GOTOSO

(1464-9)

THERE could be no greater tribute to the outstanding ability of Cosimo than the events that followed his death. His son Piero was virtually crippled with arthritis. He was a man of mature years when his father died, having been born in 1416. Cosimo is said to have thought of marrying him into one of the old noble families with a view to strengthening the position of his House. He was actually betrothed to a daughter of Francesco Battifolli, Count of Poppi, Lord of the Casentino, whom Neri di Gino was to drive from his ancestral home; but such were the protests of his future conqueror and others among Cosimo's friends that he abandoned the idea, thus making the Count, who looked on the match as a great piece of condescension on his part, a life-long enemy. The tirade against the nobles in the *Governo della Famiglia*, to whom Alberti leaves no redeeming virtue, helps us to understand the point of view of these city merchants. Cosimo never did a wiser thing than when he chose Lucrezia Tornabuoni for his daughter-in-law. She was not good-looking, but if Lorenzo inherited his mother's features, it was to her that he owed much of his ability. An admirable wife and mother, she was one of her brilliant son's most trusted counsellors. The family, originally Tornaquinci, was noble, but Lucrezia's father had changed his name to Tornabuoni when he enrolled himself as one of the people. They were soon high in favour with the Medici, who made them their Roman agents.

The enemies of the Medici expected the death of Cosimo to cause their downfall. They had no intention of acquiescing in a Medici dynasty, however unobtrusively its authority might be exercised. Men like Luca Pitti and Dietisalvi Neroni chafed at the prospect of being ruled by the invalid Piero, whom they despised as their inferior. Foreign Powers saw more clearly. They wrote him official letters of congratulation as his father's successor, and even the Venetian Pope, Paul II, was polite.

It was to Milan that the Medici looked primarily for support. The letters of the Duke on Cosimo's death were so moving that each one of them plunged the family into tears. At last they had to ask Nicodemo to beg him not to continue in such a strain, but to deign, as they were doing, to submit to the will of God. At first Sforza seemed to hang back. Piero told Nicodemo that he could be of the greatest service to him, adding that he looked up to one God in Heaven and to His Sublimity on earth. Soon, however, Sforza placed 2,000 troops at his disposal and wrote him a long letter, bidding him be conciliatory to his friends and even to his enemies. The most important point, he said, he put last—"to be devout and share your good fortune with the needy; to be reverent and place your hope in God, as did your father, Cosimo." He wrote in all sincerity "and in the true and most perfect love he felt for the son of his great and incomparable friend, Cosimo".

Cosimo had never pressed for the repayment of the enormous sums he had lent, both at home and abroad: hence Piero was unable to find out exactly where he stood. Cosimo had trusted Dietisalvi more than any of his friends and bade Piero turn to him for advice, with the result that he urged him to call in Cosimo's loans. Machiavelli says that he gave the advice from treachery, as is quite possible. The consequences were disastrous. A financial crisis ensued, the effects of which can best be seen in the Strozzi letters. There

were an alarming number of bankruptcies. Nicodemo considered that the position of the Medici was strong enough to stand the shock, especially if his master supported his friends. But he warned Piero that he must play the game : he must not ask him to write one thing to Milan and then do the exact opposite.

The leaders of the opposition had all been intimates of Cosimo : all of them showed traces of that fickleness and want of stability, with which Florence had to pay for the keen brains and the brilliant artistic gifts of her sons. There was Dietisalvi Neroni, very rich, with a classical belief in liberty. No one had been more intimate with Cosimo, but Nicodemo says that he hated him. Then there was Luca Pitti. Cosimo had known how to flatter his vanity by using him as a figure-head. Now he expected to take the place which he was fool enough to consider his by right. Though he seemed as intimate with Piero as he had been with his father, he was straining every nerve to increase his following. His party was called *del poggio*, after the palace he was building on the Poggio di S. Giorgio, across the Arno, while the Medici were the party of the Plain, *del piano*. With Pitti was Agnolo Acciaiuoli, a man of real ability, who had shared Cosimo's exile. In France he had represented both Florence and Milan and negotiated the alliance which brought René d'Anjou to Italy. Louis XI said he was frivolous and volatile and did not think well of him. At least he had his grievances. The archbishopric of Pisa had been as good as promised his son, when Cosimo gave it to a cousin and he had to be content with the see of Arezzo. Another son had married a Bardi, a relative of Cosimo's wife. When she complained of the way in which she was treated, the Bardi carried her off by force and Cosimo sided with them. The girl was to be free and, worst blow of all, to recover her rich dowry.

Piero's friends were not idle. They attacked Pitti vigorously, charging him with selling the state

piecemeal ; his house was full of bandits and criminals ; under the cloak of liberty he was robbing private citizens, despoiling the public, despising God and the saints and confounding the divine with the human. Public opinion began to vere towards Piero as the less dangerous and he won great popularity by a splendid representation of that ever-popular subject in this merchant city, the Three Wise Men, which took almost as many months to prepare as a million dollar film.

In September, 1464, there was great rejoicing at the restoration of election by lot in the teeth of the Medici party. To the people it meant a return to liberty. Whether by manipulation or not, Niccolò Soderini, who, unlike his brother Maso, was hostile to the Medici, was chosen Gonfalonier. He was escorted to the Palace by a cheering throng and crowned with olive on the way. But all he did was to call two meetings and ask instead of giving advice. Luca Pitti was no more anxious for an enquiry into past methods of government than the Medici. Consequently there was a marked improvement in the relations between the parties.

In March, 1465, Lorenzo, who was born on New Year's Day, 1449, first comes into prominence. At seventeen he was sent to Pisa to meet Don Federigo d'Aragna, who, though only thirteen, was to go to Milan to fetch Ippolita Sforza, one of the ablest and most attractive of Renaissance princesses, and escort her back to Naples as the bride of his brother Alfonso, Duke of Calabria. He was splendidly entertained with his suite of six hundred at S. Maria Novella. Federigo was the last and best-loved of his house and the two boys struck up a warm friendship.

Lorenzo's sister Bianca had married Guglielmo dei Pazzi. The Pazzi were another old family which had been enrolled among the people after Cosimo's return from banishment. They were very wealthy, rivalling the Medici themselves in magnificence, with large

trading commitments abroad, but they had never enjoyed much position, as they were thought to be proud. Guglielmo's uncle, Piero, was a friend of Piero dei Medici, and it was hoped that the match would bind the interests of the two families together. The other sister, Nannina, was married to Bernardo Rucellai, the wedding having been celebrated with great splendour. The Rucellai had made their large fortune from the dye which gave them their name. Leon Battista Alberti built their stately, elegant palace. They had been excluded from office after the return of Cosimo, but he later thought it wise to conciliate them. Piero dei Medici also had a natural daughter, Maria, who was brought up with the family, married, and became the mother of Cardinal dei Rossi.

Lorenzo got on well with his brothers-in-law. He now started with Guglielmo dei Pazzi on a tour through Bologna, Ferrara and Venice for Milan, where he was to be present at Ippolita's wedding. Everywhere he was welcomed like an heir-apparent. At Milan he stayed in the palace which Francesco Sforza had given Cosimo and which was the headquarters of the bank. Cosimo had had it completely rebuilt by Michelozzo and it was then one of the noblest houses in Milan. Though not a painter, Michelozzo had painted a portrait of Cosimo there with his own hand : the Medici balls were everywhere. Piero wrote to Lorenzo that he was not to think of expense, but of doing credit to the family. He had taken some good silver plate with him and was to give dinners. He must make himself felt and remember to behave like a man, not like a boy : the visit should prove the touchstone of his career. He must be careful not to worry the Duke, who would have quite enough on his hands at the wedding. " You should expect to be treated by His Highness like a servant or one of his household." He was obviously annoyed when Lorenzo did not find time to write to him after entering the Duchy. He must be back, he wrote,

before the bridal pair came to Florence, where they were to be entertained in the Via Larga. In the absence of Lorenzo and Guglielmo, Piero would be like a man without hands.

It was during this trip that Lorenzo struck up a lasting friendship with Ippolita Sforza, which was to prove advantageous to them both. She was soon writing to him, as these Italian rulers often did, to recommend people, even on behalf of some Florentines in Naples who had a quantity of coarse woollen cloth they wanted to import into Florentine territory, or of a political prisoner whose family was in dire distress. The best known of her letters is dated from the Castel Capuano, in Naples, July, 1474, asking for a loan; it begins, "Illustrious and mighty lord, respected as a father, The long standing good feeling and close friendship between the family of Your Highness and our illustrious parents and your special fondness for our illustrious brother, the Duke of Milan, make us confidently count on your helping us in our distress. We shall ever be grateful. We therefore ask you to lend us 2,000 ducats, free of interest, for a period to be determined by yourself, undertaking faithfully to repay the sum on the word of an honourable woman. For the sake of the affection Your Magnificence bears us, as well as for the dear memory of our parents and your friendly relations with our brothers, we trust that you will be ready to grant our request. Should you not have the sum to hand, we beg you to use your influence with your friends and acquaintances to procure it for us." And she undertakes to give the messenger who brings the money an equivalent quantity of jewels as a pledge. The formal tone, so different from that of her later letters, makes it certain that it was written by a secretary.

Early in 1466 Lorenzo was in Rome, making the acquaintance of the new Pope, Paul II, and visiting his uncle, Giovanni Tornabuoni, who managed the

family business there. The journey was partly educational, to enable Lorenzo to see the world, but his main object was to secure the contract for working the recently discovered alum deposits at Tolfa, the only ones of importance known in Europe. The Pope wanted to have the Medici capital behind him and the alum was soon bringing in a handsome profit to all parties concerned. Francesco Sforza died while Lorenzo was in Rome. This was a severe blow to the Medici. Piero wrote to Lorenzo that he felt completely lost. The Duke was a second father, an incomparable counsellor and protector. He was particularly anxious that the Pope should recognize his son Galeazzo Maria Sforza as Duke. Upon his accession depended the future of the league between Florence, Milan and Naples.

Sforza's death precipitated the inevitable crisis in Florence. Luca Pitti and the party of the Hill saw that they could not hope for success by peaceful methods, but their efforts to gain foreign support were not very fortunate. The cautious Venetians would only promise to let them have their condottiere, Bartolomeo Colleoni, whose engagement was about to expire and who was longing for a chance of active service. Lorenzo had gone on to Naples where King Ferrante treated him with great kindness. He appears to have liked him for his own sake, quite apart from his friendship with his children. His presence was very useful in counteracting the intrigues of his father's enemies. Like Louis XI and Sforza, Ferrante had no intention of deserting his ally.

In August matters began to come to a head. The conspirators decided to banish, if not to kill Piero, who was ill at Careggi. The Duke of Ferrara sent troops on the understanding that he was to be made general of a liberated Florence: but Ercole Bentivoglio, lord of Bologna, an old friend of Cosimo, warned Piero that the Duke was near Pistoia, and on hearing the news, the Duke of Milan sent 1,500 horse to help

the Medici. Piero was preparing to go to Florence in a litter on August 23rd, with his wife and a strong escort. Lorenzo, back from Naples, had gone ahead. Some suspicious-looking armed men by the road questioned him about his father. He told them that he was following. They let him go and he sent back to warn Piero to come by a different route. This presence of mind, which possibly saved his father's life, made a very favourable impression, auguring well for the future.

The danger roused the crippled Piero to an energy worthy of the best traditions of his House. He sent round papers on which his adherents were requested to write their names, with the result that a number of friends of the opposition signed from fear of being compromised. The Gonfalonier and the Signoria for September would be friendly to the Medici. The opposition, on the other hand, seemed incapable of action. They were all elderly. Soderini, the one man of energy, wished to rise with their 300 German troops and try to raise the city. Luca refused, as he had too much respect for the Medici and had no desire for bloodshed, while Dietisalvi's palace was too near that of the Medici to be safe in a riot. The futility of the movement came out when Luca visited Piero in his palace, where he was, as usual, in bed, on August 29th, and the two embraced. Antonio Pucci, an intimate friend of the Medici, had been busy, even talking of a possible marriage between Luca's daughter and someone very dear to Piero. Luca, apparently thinking that this was Lorenzo, was too eager to get out of deep water not to jump at a far less attractive bait and the moving speech Piero made him appears really to have affected him.

When the outgoing Signoria sent for both parties, Luca appeared with an armed guard, Lorenzo and Giuliano, for Piero was still in bed, with the compromising letters from Bologna. The Duke of Ferrara was ordered to stay where he was and both

sides were to lay down their arms. The opposition obeyed, being overjoyed to be quit of the whole business. The leaders visited Piero, who welcomed them, but reminded them of all they owed to Cosimo. Though Piero also accepted the terms, he gathered an armed force of several thousand men in his palace. It was as well that he did so, for there was soon news that some 6,000 infantry and 800 horse had appeared near Pistoia. He at once marched out his men and sent for the Milanese contingent, which he had had recalled. His excuse was that this was the day before the new Signoria came into office.

Finally on September 2nd Piero's men surrounded the Piazza and a *balia* was proclaimed with the usual ceremony. Luca Pitti and Dietisalvi Neroni were both present. The measures proposed secured the supremacy of the Medici for ten years. Letters of the day show that there was not a little bad feeling in many quarters at this new assertion of their power. Agnolo and Dietisalvi were very anxious and at a consultation in S. Trinità Agnolo asked his friend Nicodemo whether they might depart in the name of God. Perrens reminds us that the Florentines of that day, being an outwardly pious people—and the pious ejaculations in the letters and diaries suggest at times Puritan England—said depart in the name of God when they really meant go to the devil. Nicodemo answered laughingly that no one could be injured except by himself, but he did not think that Piero, with his well-known kindness, would treat them as they would have treated him, had they got him into their power. They then went to Piero, making almost abject offers in their submissiveness.

Meanwhile Piero was being urged from Milan to take steps to make such plots impossible in future.¹ A brother of Dietisalvi confessed under torture that the Duke of Ferrara had advised them to kill Piero, whereupon he would mediate between the

¹ Perrens, I, 320-2.

conspirators and Venice. Agnolo sent Nicodemo to intercede for him, but instead of awaiting his return he fled to Naples. Had he remained, Vespasiano assures us that Piero said that he would have forgiven him. Against Dietisalvi Neroni alone did Piero feel resentment. All the Neroni were banished with the ringleaders and Giovanni Neroni, Archbishop of Florence, withdrew voluntarily to Rome. Fines and deprivation of office were inflicted on others. A captain of the once powerful Parte Guelfa was seized in church and hauled out from among the protesting officials.

Agnolo Acciaiuoli appealed to Piero from Siena, addressing him in Latin as distinguished sir, honoured brother, and beginning, "I laugh at what I see." He reminded him that he had been banished for his father and that Piero can now requite him. "Do not hesitate to show that you do not mean to be ungrateful: I am not thinking so much of my property, though I need it, as of your own good name." Piero replied with great dignity, "The fact that you are laughing has prevented me from weeping, deeply though I feel what has befallen you. . . . Your guilt is patent. . . . I have forgotten all injury; the Republic neither can, nor ought to forgive so easily for the sake of the example, as you know better than myself." He admits all that he owes Agnolo, but, if accounts were cast, the balance might not be so uneven; "nevertheless I mean to remain in your debt so far as concerns me privately,—for the public wrong I neither can, nor will, nor ought to forgive,—and in private to forget it altogether, lay aside all bad feeling and remain a son such as I ought to be towards such a father."

The fate of Luca Pitti was even more humiliating, especially for a man of his temperament. Piero spared him, for one of his daughters had been allowed to marry a Tornabuoni instead of making the match of which he had dreamed. But he was cut by everybody,

notably by his former friends, who shunned him as a traitor. Those who had made him gifts for his palace in the hope of securing his favour demanded them back on the ground that they were loans. The very workmen abandoned the building, which remained at a standstill until it was taken over and completed by the Medici Grand Dukes.

Venice was as natural a home for these exiles as Milan had been for those of the earlier generation. Many of them broke bounds and gathered there, thus forfeiting their property, in the hope of effecting the overthrow of the Medici. They now raised a force of 8,000 horse and 6,000 foot. Bartolomeo Colleoni took command. His contract with Venice was ending and the Serenissima would have been delighted if he had succeeded, though Venice would never have supported the movement openly. Naples sent help to Piero, while the Duke of Milan appeared at the head of his own contingent. Federigo, Duke of Urbino, was commander-in-chief. The elderly condottieri spent much time in the elaborate manœuvring in which men of their type delighted without coming to blows.

Lucrezia Tornabuoni, like the Medici, did not enjoy the best of health. She seems to have suffered from rheumatism and from the eczema which few people escaped in those days of primitive sanitation. She was often at the baths of Bagni a Morba. They were near Volterra and in a lonely and exposed district. Giuliano was there with her, when she received a message from Piero telling her to come home at once, as there was a risk of her being kidnapped by the exiles. Giuliano had left before the message arrived, but Lucrezia was put into a litter and taken to Volterra that very night. Her description of the inn there shows the discomforts which even the wealthiest had to endure and explains the prevalence of eczema. The Medici made these baths, which had been known in Roman days, fashionable. Later Lucrezia bought



Photograph, Alinari

Piero il Gottoso, by Mino da Fiesole
Museo Nazionale, Florence

PIERO IL GOTTOSO

them and had them done up and good accommodation provided.

When the Florentines were ready to attack, they were paralysed by the incompetence of the Duke of Milan, who would not submit to control. So he was invited to Florence on the plea of important business. He is said to have ridden into the city with an empty purse on his sleeve—an apt symbol of the habitual relations between the Sforza and the Medici—which required a good deal of filling before he was satisfied. However, he was safely out of the way when battle was joined at La Molinella in the Romagna. It proved to be a notable feat of arms which was continued for two hours after dark by torchlight. The action was indecisive, though the Florentines and their allies had the best of it, but it ended the war. Venice had no wish for a land war on her hands with the Turk advancing and the Pope was equally anxious for peace, which was concluded at last, after endless negotiations, on a basis of the *status quo*. The exiles had now no hope of victory and Piero could feel secure.

Peace came none too soon. Florence had borne the bulk of the cost, which had been very heavy, and her trade was badly disorganized. In 1468 an ambassador noted the prevalence of discontent. Yet in that very year Piero signalized his period of authority by buying Sarzana with the strong castle of Sarzanella, which commanded the road to Genoa and the Val di Taro, leading to Lombardy, as well as Castelnuovo. These new possessions greatly strengthened the position of Florence.

Piero is a rather indefinite figure among the Medici and his nickname of Il Gottoso (the Gouty) explains why. His health made it impossible for him to play a leading part in public affairs. Even during his lifetime he was eclipsed by his brilliant son. He seems little more than a link between Cosimo and Lorenzo. Tiraboschi, who looks upon the world with the eyes of a scholar and historian of literature,

considers that if Piero were known only as the father of Lorenzo, this would be a sufficient claim upon the gratitude of mankind. What endeared him to his contemporaries was his kindness, especially as shown in his treatment of those who had conspired against him. They contrasted his conduct with that of Cosimo. Not that he shrank from extreme measures. More than one conspirator went to the block during his later years. But these executions did not weaken popular feeling towards him. He certainly had less character than either his father or Lorenzo.

Not only had Piero been trained to business, but he had enjoyed the advantages of a humanist education such as one would expect in a Medici, though he does not appear to have shown the pronounced literary and intellectual tastes of other members of that gifted family. But he was generous to the humanists and scholars who abounded in Florence and was rewarded by a number of grateful dedications.

With the artists Piero seems to have been in closer sympathy. He is especially associated with Luca della Robbia, who likewise began by working under Ghiberti on the Baptistry doors. He was a good sculptor, as the reliefs on the Campanile show, to say nothing of the delightful singing boys for the Cantoria, now in the Opera del Duomo. It was through Piero that he was associated with Donatello in this work, just as Piero was one of the first to be interested in the glazed terra cotta, which was a discovery of his own. Piero early commissioned him to decorate the ceiling of his study in the Medici palace in this way, "which was something not known before and excellent in summer".

Piero continued the pension which Cosimo had given the aged Donatello, and he also presented him with a farm to supply him with corn and wine. This the independent old sculptor soon gave him back, as he had done the cloak to Cosimo, saying that he had no wish to be troubled with household worries, and

Piero ordered the value of the produce to be placed to his credit at the Medici bank.

Then there is Benozzo Gozzoli. After a long absence from Florence, which began with a journey to Rome with Fra Angelico, under whom he worked and studied, he came back in 1458. The work of his maturity shows little trace of the influence of Angelico. He was by nature more in sympathy with the new realist movement and has been called an illustrator. The Medici were soon employing him, for there was room for a first-rate artist in Florence. It was Piero who set him to paint the frescoes in the chapel of their palace. These are his best work and a notable addition to the art of the Medici period. This brilliant pageant in all the splendour of the Tuscan spring shows the favourite Medici subject of the Three Wise Men with their rich train of followers streaming down the hillside—one might almost say from Cafaggiuolo—towards the altar. It is a rendering of the Florentine scene at the height of the glory of his patrons, notably of the Council of 1439, the chief event of Cosimo's day of power, one which justified Gozzoli in introducing an Oriental note into his work. The Emperor of the East, bearded and turbanned as well as crowned, is one of the Magi, the Greek patriarch being another. The young Lorenzo, the youngest of the three kings, is the centre of the picture, with his pages before and behind, dressed in cloth of gold, a jewelled blue cap, sleeves and shoes of red, and crowned, a fixed, far-away look in his eyes. Giuliano in a white doublet is in front, beyond Cosimo. Piero, with a red cap, tides a white horse. Here, too, we have the chief men of the Medici circle, Marsilio Ficino and Gozzoli among them, as well as some bearded Greeks. Piero was at Careggi for the summer while Gozzoli was painting in the heat in the chapel, which then seems to have had no window. He could address Piero as “amico mio singularissimo”; but he is obliged to remind him that he has

forgotten to send him 40 florins with which to lay in a stock of provisions while they are cheap, and later 10 florins wherewith to pay for the blue he has bought. The border of diamond rings with Semper proves that the work belongs to Piero's day, for his crest was a falcon with a diamond ring in its claw and the motto Semper.

Piero, too, was the first of the Medici to employ Sandro Botticelli, who had worked under Lippo Lippi. Possibly Lucrezia dei Tornabuoni had something to do with the choice; certainly it was she who inspired his beautiful Madonna of the Magnificat, with its deep, tender religious feeling, painted about 1465. Her sons appear as angels, kneeling before the Virgin, the handsome Giuliano being the more prominent of the two.

CHAPTER VII

LORENZO IL MAGNIFICO, THE MAN AND THE POET

To the last two years of the life of Piero belongs the first flowering of the romance of the youth of Lorenzo. Piero was now a complete invalid, unable to walk, and his sons came more and more into the limelight. They took the lead, as if by right, in the gaieties of the day and their ability and charm made them very popular with all classes. No one was better fitted to direct the festivities that followed the peace than Lorenzo, a Florentine of the Florentines, versatile, quick-witted, and blessed with the keenest power of enjoyment. The frontispiece of a Quattrocento collection of *ballate* is a rough woodcut which shows Lorenzo outside the family palace in the Via Larga giving his hand to a kneeling girl, while a number of others are dancing a round dance in the square beyond. The *ballata* they are singing is quite probably one of his own. It was not in brilliant court ceremonies, but in the simpler pleasures of the wealthy bourgeoisie of his own city or at the various Medici villas that Lorenzo sought his amusements.

We are told that Lucrezia Donati, the wife of Pietro Ardinghelli, found her way to his susceptible heart as early as 1465. This wealthy Eastern merchant, who belonged to a family that had been exiled by Cosimo and had recently been allowed to return, went off to the Levant immediately after his marriage and Lorenzo is said to have taken his place. He organized a splendid ball in Lucrezia's honour in the Papal rooms at S. Maria Novella, where he appeared at the head of a band of young men dressed in her colours and adorned with pearls—a scene such as he has described

■ LORENZO IL MAGNIFICO

in the *Selva d'Amore* : " Fair ladies were moving their feet to the music, fired with soft desire as they danced ; the lover, look, is by his lady ; the hands eagerly sought are joined ; glances, nods, signs, the balms of love ; a word that they alone can understand ; he picks up the flowers the lady has dropped and kisses them before he puts them back on her head or in her bosom." The *Selva d'Amore*, which owes its title to the recently-discovered *Silvae* of Statius, is obviously inspired by a true love story, one of Lorenzo's own. In its realism it might be called the first modern novel ; the genuine tone distinguishes it from a story of the Decameron. The descriptions of the lover's jealousy of the husband or of his leaving his lady at daybreak are as real as the beautiful picture of dawn that follows. Lorenzo also wrote a couple of tales in the Boccaccio style ; in one of these, *Novella di Giacoppo*, we have a beautiful Sienese of twenty-five, which he considers the ideal age for love in a woman. Before then they are too timid and lack spirit, while later they are beginning to grow cold. Alessandra Strozzi wrote to her sons about the Ardinghelli, for she believed that she had interceded for them. " A pretty wife may do more than all the prayers of Ferrante of Naples."

Lorenzo may have amused himself much as other healthy young men did, but it is unfair to single him out and condemn him for being corrupt at such a time. Compared with other rulers of his day, or, for that matter, with most princes of any day, his record is anything but unfavourable. Inspired by Ficino's Neoplatonism in the comments on his *canzoniere*, which he justifies by Dante's example, he defends true love as among the noblest of human passions : it is nothing more nor less than the desire for beauty, though it is inferior to the love for the highest good, as advocated by Plato. Like all perfect things, such a passion is rare on earth, and this is a further proof of its perfection. " A man who loves one thing for ever has of necessity no love for other things, and therefore is free

from all the errors and the sensuality into which man is liable to fall ; and loving a person who is worthy and seeking in every way to please her, he must of necessity in all his actions endeavour to be worthy of her and excel among his peers . . . ”

Of special interest in this connection is a letter to his ambassador at Milan, congratulating Ludovico Sforza on his passion for Cecilia Gallerani, who was in every way a *degno amore*. He tells him that, if Ludovico perseveres, he will derive more and more satisfaction from the affair and give ever-increasing satisfaction to his servants ; and this will be yet another proof that he has an *anima gentile*. He writes of Il Moro as one who has entered the select company of true lovers, of whom Dante is the poet, though they rarely, if ever, at that time found their ideal in marriage. He bids him persevere, but he cannot expect that all will always go well, nor must he forget (quoting Petrarch) that “ a thousand pleasures cannot make up for a single pain ”—“ mille piacer non valgon un dolore ”. Lorenzo’s reputation has suffered unjustly from the denunciations of his enemies in more ways than one.

Interesting, too, is this from the commentary on his poems : “ I confess that I am one of those who have loved with the most intense passion, and yet as a lover I have had more reason to doubt than to hope : moreover, throughout my life, though I have enjoyed more honour and position than was my due, I have had but few pleasures and few other things according to my desire ; I mean those things which the mind admits as occasional relaxations after public and private labours. Yet I live very contented and am quite satisfied with my lot.”

Lorenzo had had the best possible education. Gentile Becchi, a humanist from the cultivated court of Urbino and a favourable specimen of his class, who was later made Bishop of Arezzo, was his tutor. The boy, he said, never left his side. As one would

■ LORENZO IL MAGNIFICO

expect with such a mother, he went to Mass every morning and every evening attended vespers in the Oratory of S. Paolo. Several of Lucrezia's lauds, in which there is "more religious fervour than poetic inspiration", were written for her children. Becchi found nothing weak or childish in his pupil, who early gave signs of unusual ability. Lorenzo also had lessons from Ficino and Landino, whose commentary on Dante has kept his name alive as a force in learning longer than that of most humanists, and he is said to have been taught Greek by Argyropoulos.

Like other Florentines, Lorenzo received no military training, but he was a good rider with a passion for horses and he could hold his own in a tournament. He was above the average height, strongly built, sturdy and extraordinarily agile. His complexion was dark, his sight bad, his nose broad and flattened at the top, like his mother's, with wide nostrils that seemed to drink in life in all its aspects, his jaw large and powerful, his voice nasal and rasping. But if Nature had treated him badly in the matter of looks, he was notably dignified and affable. His lack of a sense of smell, he used laughingly to say, was small loss, since unpleasant things far outnumber the pleasant. This was certainly true of the Quattrocento. He possessed, if anything, more than the family taste for beautiful things. His agents sent him manuscripts and antiques from every corner of Italy and beyond. He was always delighted at the arrival of a new coin or statue and when he was interested "his whole being glowed with a divine fire". He was never more pleased than when he was given a bust of Plato said to have been found among the ruins of the Academy at Athens, treating it ever afterwards with the respect due from a friend and pupil of Marsilio.

His versatility, which makes Lorenzo so elusive, makes him also a true representative of an age so varied as the Renaissance. Thoroughly catholic in his tastes, he holds a place of his own even among

the Medici as a patron of art. He was genuinely interested in architecture, especially if it had a touch of the antique about it. He had almost certainly had some training in drawing and he is said to have designed the façade for the Duomo which was set up in wood by Sansovino when his son, Pope Leo X., visited the city. Alberti's treatise on architecture was a favourite book with him, as Ercole d'Este's ambassador told his master when he wished Lorenzo to lend it to him. The poets and artists recognized him as one of themselves and he made them free of his company, treating them with due honour and respect. His real intimates were all men of letters. Guicciardini says that Lorenzo was jealous, disliking anyone being thought to write better verses or do better in games than himself, but he cannot speak too highly of his generosity to any kind of real talent.

The gardens of S. Marco along the Via Larga, where he placed his statues, became, says Vasari, a nursery of genius. Bertoldo taught sculpture there and there the young Michelangelo worked, after his mask of a Faun had so impressed Lorenzo that he took him away from Ghirlandaio's studio and made him one of his household, giving him a good room and an allowance, feeding and clothing him till he was eighteen. To Michelangelo we owe our knowledge of how this household lived. At meal-times everyone took his place after Lorenzo according to his rank and kept it, no matter who came in later, so that he sometimes found himself seated above Lorenzo's own children. The Medici lived as simply as any other wealthy bourgeois family, as Lorenzo's son-in-law Franceschetto Cibo was to discover, splendidly though they could entertain on occasion.

Art, however, does not depend on patronage and the artists of Lorenzo's day were hardly of the calibre of those of the earlier generation. Ghirlandaio, Botticelli and Filippino Lippi were the most important. Domenico Ghirlandaio, who derived his name from

the garlands of gold and silver worn by the girls of Florence, for he too began as a goldsmith, was the most important of the more modern naturalist school. To his admirably composed frescoes we owe a whole series of pictures of the Florentine life of his day, including portraits of many of the leading citizens. Among his best and best-known are the frescoes he painted for Francesco Sassetti, the Medici agent at Lyons, in the Sassetti chapel of S. Trinità, depicting the story of St. Francis. Here we have what is sometimes considered to be the best portrait of Lorenzo, as well as one of his mother, which brings out her likeness to him. There is no idealism, no poetry in Ghirlandaio's work. He sets before us the great figures of Florence as homely bourgeois with hardly a trace of the qualities that raised them above the crowd, thus obviously reflecting his own character. This is no less true of the well-known frescoes in the Tornabuoni chapel in S. Maria Novella. Vasari gives a long list of the famous men whose features Ghirlandaio has preserved for us. Of special interest are the four in the left-hand lower corner, half-lengths of Ficino in clerical garb, Landino in his red cloak, Gentile Becchi and Politian with his hand raised. To Ghirlandaio we turn for a picture of everyday life in Quattrocento Florence in its homeliness and its splendour, with its brilliant jewels and bright colours.

The greatest of Lorenzo's painters was the careless, genial, spendthrift Sandro Botticelli, who loved lively company or a frolic or a jest of any kind, but yet had a deep religious strain, which showed itself in his coming, like most of the best men of his day, under the influence of Savonarola. Alessandro's real name was Filipepi; he was known as Botticelli from having been apprenticed to a jeweller called Botticello. His work might almost be regarded as another form of the great problem of his day, the attempt to reconcile Christianity with Paganism. He was as truly the court painter of Lorenzo as Politian was the court



Photograph, Alinari

Lorenzo il Magnifico, attributed to Niccolò di Forzoni Spinelli

Museo Nazionale, Florence

poet; both are in a class by themselves, showing us the world round them in a beauty all their own. The affinity between the *Stanze* of Politian and paintings like Spring, the Birth of Venus or Venus and Mars is too close to be accidental. It is impossible not to associate Politian's beautiful lines—or should we say decorative picture?—describing the birth of Venus (*Stanze*, I. 99) with Botticelli's great painting, which follows it almost in detail.

E dentro nata in atti vaghi e lieti
Una donzella non con uman volto,
Da' Zefiri lascivi spinta a proda,
Gir sopra un nicchio ; e par che il ciel ne goda.

But his Spring, like his Venus, lacks the serenity of a classical goddess. The women are all of the same frail type, with the wistful, brooding melancholy in their faces. Botticelli is also thought to have found his ideal in Giuliano's love, the fair Simonetta. A portrait in the Pitti was long ascribed to Botticelli and called La Bella Simonetta, but the experts will no longer allow that it is by him. The Venus in the Mars and Venus in our National Gallery is now considered to be the best authenticated likeness of her. If Spring is Simonetta, the dark-haired Mercury in the cloak of Florentine red is Giuliano, while the laurel symbolizes Lorenzo, whom his friends often called Lauro.

Of special interest for the Medici is Botticelli's rendering of the Adoration of the Magi, now in the Uffizzi. Cosimo and Piero are kneeling in the centre of the picture with Lorenzo and young Giuliano, the former grasping a sword, at the side. Young suggests that it was painted for Piero as a votive offering for the crushing of the attempted rising of Luca Pitti and the suggestion has been accepted by others.

The times were too bad for Lorenzo to indulge in the lavish building of Cosimo. The finest building erected, or rather begun, in Florence in his day was the noble Strozzi palace. Piero had recalled the

Strozzi from exile. They had made a large fortune in Naples, where they were very popular at court. Ferrante, who had put in a word for them with Lorenzo on his first visit to Naples, had continued to press for their return and Lucrezia Tornabuoni had also pleaded for them. Filippo Strozzi, knowing his excellent mother, had bidden her, just before he entered Florence, have something better than sausages for supper. He is said to have been so afraid of arousing Lorenzo's jealousy by his palace that he took great pains to pretend that he was building only on account of his large family and wanted merely a simple house suited for a citizen. Lorenzo, with his fondness for architecture, became interested and asked to see the plans. But when he suggested improvements Filippo objected to everything that would involve expense or look pretentious, yielding only after a struggle, till in the end the plans were just what he had wished. The foundation-stone was laid in 1489. Benedetto da Maino was the first architect, being succeeded by Simone Pollaiolo. The original plans were far more extensive than the existing palace.

An interesting scheme of Lorenzo was the library which he was preparing to build to contain all the books belonging to the Medici, though he did not live to complete it. Naturally, he was an eager collector. In a characteristic fit of enthusiasm he once told Politian that he wished that he and Pico could find him so many books that he would be forced to sell his very furniture to buy them. The King of Hungary paid a debt to him in books. He had agents everywhere and at Padua he even kept copyists, for Padua was an important centre of the book trade on account of the university and because Venice was the chief port to which books were brought from the East. Politian was always on the look-out for him when travelling. Though the palmy days of Cosimo were over, many valuable additions were made to the Medici library in his day.

Lorenzo, says De Sanctis, "had plenty of wit and plenty of fancy, both characteristic of the cultivated bourgeois of Florence. He was the most Florentine of the Florentines, not of the old school, be it understood. Christian and Platonist in theory, in a scholastic sense, in practice an epicurean and indifferent, one of the people beneath his lordly cloak and a merchant with a biting, witty tongue, sociable, as fond of the pleasures of the sense as those of the mind, frequenting churches and taverns, writing lauds and *strambotti*, alternating nocturnal orgies with academic discussions.

. . . His culture was classical, his genius Tuscan, steeped in all the life and beauty of the dialect. He managed the dialect with the same skill with which he managed the people, who will let themselves be led by anyone who understands them and knows how to humour them in their character and their ways. If you understand a man, you are his master."

Such a man was naturally the most sociable of souls, with a number of gifted, lively friends corresponding to his varied activities, to whom he was genuinely attached and whom he treated with the unaffected simplicity he used with all. One of the earliest and closest was his tutor, Marsilio Ficino. We get a charming picture of him in Lorenzo's poem, *Altercazione, ovvero Dialogo*. Weary of Florence and of the worries of his life there, Lorenzo, who has slipped away to Careggi, sings the joys and the peace of the country to a shepherd, who replies by recounting the hardships of his own lot with the vivid realism which seems to become second nature to Lorenzo the moment he sets foot in the country. Then they are both attracted by the sound of a sweet voice and a music no less sweet approaching them. Peering through the leaves, they see Marsilio, "upon whom Heaven has showered all its grace, making him a perpetual mirror to mortal men; always a lover of the sacred Muses, and no less of true wisdom, so that the one never excludes the other." They both rose

to greet him respectfully, as their common father. Marsilio, whose health was delicate, spent most of his time at his little farm of Montevercchio, where, after the manner of his kind, he did an astonishing amount of work. In the neighbourhood both Politian and Pico della Mirandola had cottages, also given them by the Medici. Like Lorenzo, he was very fond of music and had invented a system of singing to the lyre which he played with a plectrum of his own devising, as he is doing in the poem. Just as he kept a lamp burning before the bust of Plato, so he honoured Cosimo, to whom he considered he owed no less. On the day of SS. Cosimo e Damiano (September 27th) he gave a supper to all the peasants in the neighbourhood who had been Cosimo's tenants, with singing and dancing and music. Lorenzo and the shepherd ask him to decide their dispute and the rest of the poem is an exposition by Marsilio of the true good of man, the *summum bonum*, which cannot lie anywhere in the domain of the senses. The poem is not one of Lorenzo's best, but it is an admirably clear exposition of the teaching of the schools and shows how Lorenzo had profited by Marsilio's lectures.

Ficino was more of a Neo-Platonist than a Platonist. His avowed object was to reconcile Platonism with religion and his discovery of the frequency with which Platonism confirms Christian dogmas gave him great satisfaction. A mystic, a believer in astrology, he did not always satisfy the more orthodox. He was even accused of magical practices, but his friends easily cleared him of the charge. Not till he was forty, in 1473, did Ficino become a priest and then only after long hesitation. His two benefices brought him in very little, as he had to provide curates. Holding that there was nothing better than a good priest and nothing worse than a bad one, he brought to his duties a conscientiousness rare among men of his position at that time, often preaching in his parishes as well as in Florence. Content with his lot and

happy in his work, he was entirely without the desire for display and luxury then so common among churchmen and humanists.

Lorenzo was much attached to Marsilio. From Pisa, about 1473, he urges him to write whatever comes into his head, "for nothing ever comes from you that is not good. You never have an unworthy thought, so that you could never write me anything that is not profitable or delightful. I long for your letters, because they combine the most polished style with sound matter." Sincere himself, Lorenzo could recognize sincerity when he saw it and one in his position soon learnt to value it.

Fond though Marsilio undoubtedly was of his pupil, there is often a touch almost of fulsomeness—or was it merely overflowing kindness?—in his letters, which was clearly part of the man, for he could write of Politian's verse translations of Homer that it is difficult to decide whether the Latin or the Greek is the original. A letter full of praise ends, "there is something great in you, Lorenzo, something undoubtedly great"; but that he may not be suspected of flattery, he calls him "an instrument of God, excellent man, destined—I know what I am saying—to do something remarkable", so long as he obeys the will of the divine Master. But he can also implore him not to waste his time upon idle pleasures and dissipations. Such amusements rob him of his true self, making a slave of one born to be a ruler. Clearly Marsilio had little sympathy with the gayer part of Lorenzo's many-sided nature. He must begin to turn over the new leaf at once, not wait till to-morrow. But "Lorenzo will either look black, or laugh. Both are bad." However, Lorenzo thanks him, saying that it is worth while wasting one's time to get such a letter. Elsewhere one is glad to find Lorenzo reproving Marsilio for praising him so excessively. But the affectionate tone of the letters shows the strength of the bond that united them. Lorenzo says

that there was never anything so complete, so lasting, so genuine, as their friendship. Ficino's virtues and the length of its duration prove that it must be of God. It is worth remembering that it was at Lorenzo's request that Marsilio translated Dante's *De Monarchia*, while he undertook to pay for the printing of his version of Plotinus, which was finished just a month after Lorenzo's death.

"To expound the works of Ficino is to write the history of Platonism in Italy. . . . His hearers were content to repeat the master's ideas: the Academy came into being and died with him. It was really nothing more than a gathering of friends and disciples, who, protected by the Medici, gathered round him to discuss the philosophy of Plato."¹ There was no more enthusiastic member of this academy than the young Lorenzo. November 7th, said to be the date of the birth and the death of Plato, was celebrated with a banquet, followed by a philosophical discussion and an almost religious apotheosis of the master. Other meetings and discussions were held at other times. But Ficino was the only member who might now be called a philosopher. Important though the Academy was as a cultural influence in its day, there was no real philosophy in its discussions, as we may see from the descriptions that have come down to us. The best is from the pen of Cristoforo Landino. Like Marsilio and, of course, Lorenzo, he by no means despised the vulgar tongue. The meeting took place among the beech woods of Camaldoli, high up in the Apennines, hard by Falterona and the sources of the Arno, of which Lorenzo sings in the *Selva d'Amore*. Hither the two young Medici had gone to escape the heat with Ficino and Alamanno Rinuccini and other friends, not long before the death of Piero. Guests of the monks, they spent their time in religious exercises, picnics, walks and talks.

¹ Villari, *Machiavelli*, I, 176.

Leon Battista Alberti joined them from across the mountains. He may be said to embody the universality that was the ideal of the men of the Renaissance, the ideal they had assimilated from the Greeks, more completely than any other man of his day. Primarily an architect, the builder of S. Francesco at Rimini, the façade of S. Maria Novella in Florence and the Rucellai palace, he wrote a notable treatise on architecture which was a favourite book with Lorenzo. He was also painter, sculptor, poet, philosopher and musician. "Attractive in appearance, graceful in bearing, Leon Battista brought to his habits and tastes the grace, the balance, the serenity of which his art is the expression. He delighted in bodily exercises, in dancing, jumping, ball-playing and riding, but they all had to be done without effort, easily and with the air of a gentleman." This classical ideal of balance, of harmony, of the golden mean, must inspire the whole of life. All that disturbs its even serenity must be avoided. Happiness is the "peace and quietness of a joyous mind contented with itself": therefore you should avoid those ill of contagious disease, because it is the height of folly "not to prefer the sure life of a number of healthy people to the doubtful health of a sick man".

In the first discussion Alberti championed the contemplative life, while Lorenzo contended that both the active and the contemplative were necessary. He admits the superiority of the contemplative, which should guide the active, but characteristically maintains that the complete man must be able to value both. And in this he shows his superiority to men of Alberti's type who, in spite of their claims to universality, were really far less universal than Lorenzo, seeing that they ignored the active life, in which they often played no part. On the second day the *summum bonum* was discussed in the usual cloud of empty phrases and classical quotations that then passed for philosophy. On the third Alberti sought to prove by

means of far-fetched allegories that all Christian and Platonic doctrines are to be found in Virgil.

Ficino describes one of these banquets in his *Libro dell'Amore*, which is a commentary on Plato's *Symposium*. On November 7th, 1474, Lorenzo invited nine brother Platonists, the number of the Muses, to Careggi. Each of the guests expounded in the strange allegorical way of the time, which is not unlike the method often used by the preachers of the day, the speeches of several of the interlocutors in the *Symposium*. Such gatherings were not uncommon among the older Florentines, sociable, quick of wit, good talkers and also capable of forming lasting friendships. Food and wine in moderation refreshed the body; the social gifts and learning of the guests stimulated the brain; witty sallies enlivened the discussions and music alternated with amusing stories.¹ Nowhere but in Plato's own Athens would it have been possible to hold similar gatherings in a community of wealthy merchants who knew how to value culture as highly as the riches that made it possible.

Their beautiful villas round Florence were the true homes of the Medici. Lorenzo had the family taste for country life, throwing himself into its pleasures with all his power of enjoyment. Cosimo, like a retired tradesman, would prune his vines and graft his fruit trees, but Lorenzo had the delight of his Tornaquinci ancestors in the chase. The hunt forms the leading incident in Politian's *Stanzze*. They break off before Giuliano begins to arm himself for the tournament. This is as it should be, for Politian sang what were the real pleasures of this cultivated, unwarlike, bourgeois society. The tournament was little more than a fancy dress display, as Lorenzo's clear-sighted notes imply. The costumes were as important as the jousting. It was not the expression of anything real in the lives of a community which hired condottieri to do its fighting.

¹ Ficino, *Epist.*, III, 739.

One has but to open Lorenzo's poems to realize his keen enjoyment not merely of country life, but of the beauty of nature in every form. His friend Politian, steeped in the classics, brings the landscape before us in its gorgeous spring splendour in the almost perfect stanzas that raise him above all other Italian poets of the day. But, like few Italian poets, Lorenzo can see beauty in winter as truly as in spring and describe it with a clear-sighted realism that knows nothing of classical convention. Ghirlandaio could not paint a more realistic picture of a fine hunting day than does he in *La Caccia col Falcone*. His enjoyment breathes in every line. Probably he wrote it off at white heat almost as soon as he got back with the dogs and the falcons which it describes. Such was his habit, for with him poetry was as much an amusement as hunting. He had neither the inclination, nor the time to polish his verses. Poet though he is, he has been well called a splendid dilettante of the life of the intellect. There is no flattery in Politian's admiration of his patron's versatility—"what others call business and hard work will be play to you":

We see the reddening dawn touch the hill with gold, the birds beginning to twitter, the owls hurrying back to the woods, the air pure and fresh and crystal clear as the careful cottage woman lets out her pigs and sheep, when he is wakened by the sound of bells and barking dogs. The dogs, all mentioned by name, notably the veteran Buontempo, are sent ahead to be clear of the horses. Luigi Pulci, the poet, is nowhere to be found. Probably he has gone off into the wood, under the spell of some queer fancy, to scribble a

¹ Quodque alii studiumque vocant durumque laborem,
Hic tibi ludus erit; fessus civilibus actis,
Huc is emeritas acuens ad carmina vires.
Felix ingenio, felix cui pectore tantas
Instaurare vices, cui fas tam magna capaci
Alternare animo, et varias ita nectere curas.

(End of *Nutricia*, in *Silvas*.)

sonnet. So they start without him. Every incident is vividly portrayed, even to the quarrel between the two huntsmen when their falcons fight in the air, which is made up by the kindly apology of Dionigi.

Politian often joined these parties : he describes a day's hawking at Pisa in a letter to Lorenzo's wife Clarice. The hunt in the *Stanze*, when Giuliano pursues the phantom stag put in his way by Cupid in order that he may fall in with the fair Simonetta, is a much more elaborate affair. The gay company surrounds the thick wood in which the beaters are busy, every way out being closed by nets and dogs. Inside, other dogs are following the scent. The rustling and barking draw nearer : the wood echoes with whistles and the blows of the beaters and the blare of the horns.

If we may judge from his poems, or only from the similes in them, it is clear that Nature in all her aspects, with hunting and hawking, was among Lorenzo's chief pleasures. In the early portions of the *Selva d'Amore* the descriptions are very detailed and positively disproportionate in length. It is not idle boasting, conventional though it sounds, when he bids others look for honour and splendour with all the care and bitterness they bring with them ; for him a green meadow pied with fair flowers, a stream laving the grass that edges it, a bird complaining of love ; shady woods, rocks and high mountains, dark caves with a timid nymph or two. The alertness of his eye is remarkable. I will quote this picture of dawn at the end of the *Selva d'Amore* : "I feel a gentle breeze blowing from the reddening dawn. . . . Already some of the more eager birds are calling upon the sun with their sweet notes . . . then follows the chorus of a thousand different songsters [the Dawn chorus]. The flowers, robbed of half their beauty without the sun, can no longer remain closed ; first of one colour, then, lit by the sun, they don a thousand hues which no art could rival. The dawn flees

routed : the air throws off its changing garment and clothes itself with the light that gilds it, while it is all black where Phoebus does not penetrate. There is my sun rising from the mountain and leaving those regions in gloomy shadow : I see the light and already I feel the warmth, the light and the beauty and the glow of love.”²

Poggio a Caiano, half way to Pistoia, was Lorenzo’s favourite villa. He bought it and had it rebuilt by Giuliano di San Gallo, who owed his nickname to his patron, for whom he built the monastery of S. Gallo. The design is simple, severe and elegant : the great bastions suggest a fortress rather than a villa. Here was a fine herd of cattle, and here Lorenzo kept his stud. He was always passionately fond of horses, which he was perpetually buying, giving or receiving, going as far as Egypt and the Barbary coast for them. With King Ferrante of Naples he had endless dealings, for the Neapolitan breed was famous ; in 1488 he bought twenty mares from him and Ferrante also sent him some of his excellent falcons. Princes lent each other horses for tournaments and other important occasions. Lorenzo delighted in racing and was, as

² Sento un soave venticel che spir'a
Dalla aurora rutilante e rossa . . .

Già alcun de' più solleciti augelli
Chiaman il sol con certi dolci versi ;
E impongono la canzona ; e segue quelli
Il coro poi di mille augeli diversi.
I fior, che senza sol si fan men belli,
Non posson più nella boccia tenersi :
Pria d'un color ■ poi dal sol dipinti
Si fan di mille da niun'arte vinti.

Cacciata fugge dinanzi l'aurora :
L'aer già spoglia la cangiante vesta,
E vestesi di luce che l'indora :
Di negro quel che senza Febo resta.
Ecco il mio sol che vien del monte foma,
E lascia quella parte ombrosa ■ mesta :
Veggo la luce ; e sento già il calore,
La luce e la bellezze e'l caldo amore.

we should expect, very lucky. One of the best of his racehorses, Morello, so called from its colour, would take food from his hand alone when out of sorts, and always showed signs of joy at his approach.

This villa inspired *Ambra*, one of the best of his poems. The beautiful gardens run down to the Ombrone, a tributary of the Arno, which often gave trouble with floods. Ambra, the nymph of the villa, is loved by the shepherd Lauro (Lorenzo). She goes to bathe in the Ombrone, when her beauty fires the river-god with love. He pursues her and to escape him she prays Diana to turn her into the rock there which had something of the shape of a woman and which gave Lorenzo the idea of the poem. The winter scene is admirable. The rivers come joyously out of their caves to meet the friendly rain that restores their strength, returning thanks to Father Ocean, their brows decked with sedge and river plants. In their delight they sound conch shells and twisted horns and then begin to turn their rage against their hated banks. Those from afar join their waters and, like old friends, tell each other of the strange countries they have visited. But they cannot find their way out. Hence the flood. This picture of the rise of the waters and the havoc in the valley is obviously drawn from life. A born extravert with the keenest of eyes for the object, Lorenzo is inclined to over-stress the details. Here, for instance, they are not completely harmonized into a whole as in the *Caccia col Falcone*. They tend to stand out too individually. He sees them with the clearness, with something of the simplicity of a peasant. And herein lies the foundation of his character, perhaps the chief secret of his charm and popularity as a man (not necessarily as a politician), his sincerity, his honest singleness of purpose, which comes out again and again in his relations with his friends.

Lorenzo was a loyal champion of the claims of Italian against Latin, as was only fitting in one of his

generation, since most of the pioneer spade work of rediscovering the classics had been done by the older humanists of Cosimo's day. With Federigo d'Aragona he once fell to discussing Italian poetry, of which the Neapolitan, brought up at the thoroughly humanistic court of Ferrante of Aragon, appears to have known next to nothing. He expressed a wish to have a collection of the best Italian poets and Lorenzo undertook to supply him with one, which is now held to date from 1476. The letter accompanying it was probably written by Politian, though it may well have been based on suggestions from Lorenzo and contain his ideas. At the end of the collection he ventures to send four sonnets of his own, which, he says with conventional modesty, may serve as a foil to the rest. In this letter there are a few words in defence of Italian, but his advocacy of the cause of his native tongue is argued with much greater force in the commentary to his own *Canzoniere*, when he defends himself against a possible charge of indulging in such trifles as love poems in Italian instead of in graver pursuits.

Lorenzo was also keenly interested in the popular poetry of Tuscany, just as he was in the peasants on the Medici estates who produced it. In this, as in much else, he is the son of Lucrezia Tornabuoni. Deeply religious though she was, she knew how to appreciate the gifts of Luigi Pulci, who may well have helped to interest Lorenzo in this poetry of the people. In *La Nencia da Barberino* Lorenzo shows the same realism as in his pictures of the countryside, which, like the peasants, was associated with his happy hours of leisure, while hawking and amusing himself among them in his princely villas round Florence. The peasant Vallera sings to his Nencia in the octaves of the popular Tuscan *rispetti*, in which, says Carducci, "the feelings of the genial shepherd awaken images coarse and graceful, always highly novel from their simplicity". The simple and the ingenuous are here

reproduced with an artistic refinement so spontaneous that it gives the illusion of the primitive. The poem is redolent of the soil, standing as it does half way between the coarser realism of Pulci's *La Beccaria* and Politian's refined *La Brunetta*, from which, though higher poetry, all the genuine Tuscan peasant has evaporated in the idyll which has its roots in the classics. Both these were inspired by *La Nencia*, which Lorenzo wrote under a genuine impulse: it is unmistakable popular poetry which is also art.

Equally realistic, almost a Dutch genre picture, is *I Beoni*, which opens with a characteristic description of autumn on the farm. Lorenzo comes back to "la mia Fiorenza" when a cask is to be broached and finds a friend who tells him the names of the famous toppers hurrying to the treat. It is hardly a scene that one associates with Quattrocento Florence, but the portraits are vivid: it is said to have been written at a single sitting, with Lorenzo's usual facility. It is quite possible that, in his high spirits, he was poking a little fun at his adored Dante, for parody is almost as sure a proof of respect as imitation, though his *terza rima* is more like that of Petrarch's *Trionfi*. In his enthusiasm he even attempted to recover the bones of the poet, whom Niccoli scorned as a poet for cobblers, from Ravenna, but in vain.

In nothing did Lorenzo show himself a truer Florentine than in the eagerness with which he threw himself into the carnival and other similar festivities, which were never more brilliant than in his day. Classical, symbolical and fantastic cars were the chief features. They were escorted by long processions of revellers, often as many as three hundred horsemen, dressed in the most elaborate costumes and singing as they went, through the streets by the light of flaring torches for half the night. The greatest artists vied with one another in designing the cars and triumphal arches and costumes. No one was more in demand than Piero di Cosimo, with his weird fancy



Lucrezia Tornabuoni, by Botticelli

Städtisches Museum, Berlin

and his knack of devising the most fantastic monsters. There were also men on stilts representing giants and spirits walking above the crowd. It was for these cars that many of Lorenzo's carnival songs were written—The Song of the Seven Planets—The Young Wives and the Old Husbands—The Shoemakers—The Makers of Gold Thread, and the like. The dialogue between the girls revelling in their carnival freedom and the censorious Cicadas ends with the girls' answer, " Then what is the use of our beauty, if it is to be wasted for words ? Hurrah for love and kindness ! Death to envy and to all croakers ! Evil tongues may do their worst, we shall do and you will talk."¹ This is the true carnival note, which finds its best and best-known expression in the most popular of all Lorenzo's poems, *The Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne*,

Quant' è bella giovinezza,
Che si fugge tuttavia !
Chi vuol esser lieto, sia :
Di doman non c'è certezza.²

This note is continually recurring in his lighter poems, reflecting the pagan sensuousness that was an integral part of the man. These famous lines have long been quoted as symbolical of the gay life of Renaissance Florence in its most brilliant period.

Some of the *Canti Carnascialeschi* may sound coarse to the more refined taste of to-day, or perhaps we should say of yesterday, and they often abound in innuendoes. Lorenzo has been solemnly charged by people who should have known better with writing them to corrupt the people of Florence. No charge

¹ Or che val nostra bellezza,
Se si perde per parole ?
Viva amore e gentilezza !
Muoia invidia e a chi ben duole !
Dica pur chi mal dir vuole,
Noi faremo e voi direte.

¹ How fair is youth, but youth flies fast. Let those who would be merry; we know not what to-morrow brings.

could be more absurd, fashionable though it has been with those who see in him a successor of the typical tyrant of Plutarch or a predecessor of the alien conqueror robbing the country of its liberty. Carnivaal was then distinctly broad, nowhere more so than in Rome, where the Popes and the cardinals frankly enjoyed its licence. Lorenzo, who was probably the first real poet to write these songs, merely gave the people what they were used to. Many of the other carnival songs that have come down to us are far coarser.

The *Canzoni a ballo* are more light and mocking. They have none of the higher beauty of the best of Politian's. There is the mock advice of a mother to her daughter, a mock confession of sins against love, the seven joys of love and the like. But again Lorenzo is merely adopting the tone of the day with a lightness of touch that is all his own. Such poems may not breathe a high moral tone : they shocked the moralists and Savonarola was soon denouncing them ; but they were no more meant to be taken seriously than our own popular songs. The music was sometimes supplied by Squarcialupi, often known as Maestro Antonio degli Organi, the musician who had entered the Medici service under Cosimo and was very intimate with his patron. Lorenzo was genuinely fond of music and could sing, though his voice was harsh. He appears to have been specially interested in the organ and organ-playing and he defended Maestro Antonio, who was not a model of propriety, against his critics with the plea of the difficulty of finding good masters. Heinrich Isaack, the Bohemian, seems to have been his leading musician. He wrote the music for the ballads and other works of his master and entered into the Florentine carnival as heartily as Lorenzo.

Lastly there are the religious poems, in which Lorenzo had the example of his mother before him, the *Laudi*. They are his Lent after his carnival,

distinctly inferior to the others, for his heart was rather with the revellers than with the penitents. A letter from Politian to Clarice (April 8th, 1476) brings out the relationship. "Yesterday, after leaving Florence, we came as far as S. Miniato (al Tedesco) . . . singing all the way, and occasionally talking of holy things, so as not to forget Lent. . . . Lorenzo is brilliant and keeps the whole company lively. . . . When we reached S. Miniato yesterday we began by reading a little St Augustine, but this was soon set aside for music and watching and instructing a well-known dancer who is here. Lorenzo is just off to Mass. I will finish later." He was, like his contemporaries, a dutiful observer of outward forms as ordained by the Church. If not devout, he was not indifferent. He had been brought up under the influence of his mother and of Marsilio Ficino, to both of whom he was devoted, and he often had a craving, with the depression to which he was subject, for repose, for peace, such as he found at times in country life. There is feeling in the Laud beginning,

O Dio, o sommo bene, or come fai,
Che te sol cerco e non ti trovo mai? . . .

But most of them, written in the metres of the *ballate*, are popular and quite uninspired.

CHAPTER VIII

LORENZO'S TOURNAMENT AND MARRIAGE (1468-9)

THE toast of the young men of Florence, whose name is for ever associated with Giuliano, thanks to Politian's brilliant *Stanze* in honour of his tournament, was Simonetta dei Cattanei. A Genoese by birth—could she have had a more ideal birthplace than Porto Venere?—she had married Marco Vespucci, of a well-known Florentine family, at the age of sixteen. She was, says Lorenzo, endowed with a beauty and a sweetness almost without parallel. Among her other excellent qualities so gentle and winning was her manner that all those who came in contact with her thought that they were especially loved by her. The young women of her own age not only felt no jealousy of such wonderful perfection, but highly praised and extolled her beauty and goodness, so that it seemed impossible that so many men should love her without jealousy and so many women praise her without envy. Simonetta died in April, 1476, of a wasting sickness and was carried to Ognisanti on an open bier. Lorenzo, who was at Pisa, sent his own doctor to her and was regularly informed of the progress of her malady. He assures us that pity for her youth and her beauty awakened profound and general regret. Botticelli painted her as Politian sang her. In fact, she became almost the symbol of the happy years that ended with the conspiracy of the Pazzi, the short, fleeting youth of Lorenzo's early rule, years such as Florence was never to know again.

Lorenzo, too, uses her as a symbol in the commentary on his *Canzoniere*, which is obviously inspired by

Dante's *Vita Nuova*. "It was night and we were walking together, speaking of the general loss, and as we talked, the weather being very calm, I turned my eyes to a very bright star which had appeared in the West and was of such splendour that it far outshone the other stars . . . and being at first astonished at it, I turned to my friend and said, 'We must not be astonished, because the soul of that most gentle lady has either been transformed into that new star or has been united with it.'"

Then he says he began to think how happy a man might be who had the good fortune to sing of such a lady, and to look about for someone worthy of a love so constant. Naturally a young man of his age and rank did not have to wait long. He went to the marriage of a friend very unwillingly, he assures us, for he had lost all taste for such frivolities and frequented them merely to do as others did. Here he saw and loved Lucrezia Donati, whom he found in every way worthy and much superior to the dead Simonetta. Her wit was equal to her beauty and her charm. Above all she had the loveliest hands. Lorenzo jested, like other young men of his class, and, at his request, she gave him a chaplet of violets, whereupon he promised to hold a tournament in her honour. Lucrezia was obviously "the love of the poet, not the man", but the name of the official keeper of Lorenzo's heart was soon known throughout Florence and Politian mentions her in his *Stanze*. It was in Lucrezia's honour that Lorenzo wrote his love poems, which contain some of the best of his poetry : he was writing them long after his marriage and long after he had ceased to give Lucrezia a serious thought. The whole story is little more than a conventional fiction, for Simonetta died eight years after Lorenzo's tournament.

But he did not forget his promise and in February, 1468, he gave the tournament in honour of Lucrezia Donati. He was merely following the fashion. In

order to do as others do, he tells us in his notes, he gave a tournament on the Piazza S. Croce, at great expense and with great luxury, for it cost about 10,000 ducats. Luca Pulci chronicled it in verse. The poem has been ascribed to his brother, Luigi, but it is difficult to believe that he would have produced anything quite so pedestrian, interesting though the details are. Pulci never saw a more joyous festival, he says, for the war was at last over and forgotten. That redoubtable warrior of Milan, now Captain of the Florentines, Roberto da Sanseverino, was the chief of the judges. One can guess what he thought of these carpet knights who knew nothing of war.

Piazza S. Croce can have witnessed few more magnificent spectacles. The knights came from the best-known families, a Benci, a Pucci, two Pitti, with Francesco and Guglielmo Pazzi among them. Each was preceded by his own standard, adorned with his arms and devices, and his pages. Lorenzo was, of course, the hero of the day. His entry was heralded by trumpeters. Then came a page with his banner, purple and white, with a sun and a rainbow, upon it his motto, "*Le temps revient*", and a laurel. He was followed by twelve young Florentines belonging to the leading families. After them came Giuliano, a handsome, well-set-up boy of fifteen in a silk doublet embroidered with pearls and silver thread, a black velvet cap with three feathers of gold thread, adorned with pearls and rubies; total cost, carefully estimated in true Renaissance style, 8,000 florins. Five pages and the pipers and tabourers separated him from his brother. Lorenzo wore a surcoat adorned with a cape of red and white silk decorated with fresh and withering roses, embroidered in large pearls. On his black cap, heavily encrusted with pearls, rubies and diamonds, was a pearl worth five hundred ducats, while the great Medici diamond, "*Il Libro*", valued at over 2,000 ducats, was in the middle of his shield. He rode the dapple grey, Fals' Amico, which King Ferrante lent

him for the occasion. He took a great fancy to the horse and in 1470 Ferrante sent it him with another, as we learn from a letter of Pulci, who was then in Naples. Fals' Amico was caparisoned in red and white velvet, thickly sewn with pearls. With Lorenzo were twelve young men on horseback and sixty-four on foot.

Lorenzo donned a splendid suit of armour for the tournament, made by famous armourers of Milan, which was sent him by the Duke, and a helmet with a blue crest. His surcoat was of blue velvet fringed with gold and on it the lilies of France, recently granted to Piero by Louis XI, in gold on an azure field. They were also on his shield. For the fighting he mounted a charger sent by Borso d'Este. He threw himself into the business in hand with his usual spirit and broke a number of lances, the first with the vigorous Carlo Borromeo, who was awarded the second prize. Italian tournaments were quite harmless at this time. To Lorenzo was awarded of right the first prize. His notes show that he valued this kind of thing at its true worth : "though I was young and no great hitter, the first prize was awarded me, a silver helmet with a crest of Mars." After saying that he will pray Heaven that Lorenzo's lovely goddess will take pity on him, Pulci tells us that everyone thronged back to the Medici palace to offer congratulations and to enjoy the music and dancing, which was more to Lorenzo's taste than jousting and more in keeping with Quattrocento Florence.

This devotion, possibly now platonic, to Lucrezia Donati, though it was the nominal inspiration of one of the best of the *canzonieri* of the Quattrocento, was not allowed to interfere with the serious business of finding a wife for the young heir of the Medici, who would have been the last person to desire that it should. Indeed, the tournament was held partly in honour of his approaching marriage. Pulci assures us that, had Madonna Clarice been present, the whole

city would have been perfectly happy. Clarice Orsini also wrote Lorenzo a formal little note of congratulation on his success. They had not yet met.

Piero, owing to the state of his health, was anxious to see Lorenzo married as soon as possible. In choosing him a wife his parents decided to break with family tradition and not to go to one of the Florentine families of their own class, but to one of the old noble houses of Italy. Whatever the motive, whether they were afraid of awakening jealousy if they chose a bride from Florence, or whether their position seemed to them sufficiently well established for them to look higher and gradually raise themselves to the rank of the ruling houses, their choice was, on the whole, unfortunate. The city was anything but pleased to hear that Lorenzo was to marry Clarice Orsini, for the Orsini pride was a byword.

The idea seems to have originated with Roberto Orsini, an uncle of the bride, and Giovanni Tornabuoni, manager of the Medici bank in Rome, took the lead in the negotiations. Clarice was an Orsini on both sides. Her father was one of the two brothers who owned the estates at Monte Rotondo, not far from Rome, her mother being one of the Orsini of Bracciano, the heads of the clan. The alliance offered many advantages, owing to the power and prestige of the Orsini as soldiers and churchmen, their numerous castles and the very size of the family. There was a solid, well-established permanence about this great Roman house which one might look for in vain in many of the ruling families of the Quattrocento.

Lorenzo appears to have seen Clarice when in Rome in 1467, probably at Mass, without the knowledge of any of the relations on either side. At that time he could hardly have seen her in any other way. His mother was a typical Florentine of her class. One remembers the almost animal tone in which Alessandra Strozzi describes the bodies of the girls she proposes as brides for her exiled son Filippo: the style of his

cousin, Parenti, is hardly more edifying. Lucrezia made a point of going to Rome to report upon her proposed daughter-in-law. Piero was down with a painful attack of gout. Clarice, she writes, is above the middle height, has a good complexion and nice manners, though not so charming as those of her own daughters : but she was so unassuming that it would be easy to teach her the Medici ways. Her hair is not fair, for in Rome the women are not fair, but it has a reddish tinge and is plentiful. Her face is round, but does not displease her critic. Her neck is beautiful though it looks a little thin, or, more properly, delicate. "Her breasts I could not see, as they are completely covered here, but they seemed to me well proportioned. She does not carry her head proudly, like our girls, but pokes it rather forward, probably from shyness ; indeed, I see no fault in her except shyness. Her hands are long and delicate. In fact, I think the girl is much above the average, though she cannot compare with Maria, Lucrezia and Bianca. Lorenzo has seen her and you can find out whether he likes her. I am sure that whatever you and he decide will be right. May God rule it all for the best. . . ." Later she wrote that her visit to Clarice was quite informal, so that, if nothing came of it, there would be no trouble. "The girl has two good points, she is tall and fair ; her face is not pretty, but it is not common, and her figure is good." She is pleased to hear that Piero's answer is favourable. "I am sure that, when I get back and tell you all, you will be quite satisfied, especially as Lorenzo is pleased. . . . You say I write coldly about her : I do so in order not to raise exaggerated hopes. There is no better-looking girl unmarried to-day in Florence."

The negotiations went on slowly. The Archbishop of Pisa, a distant cousin, was sent to Rome by the family to work with Tornabuoni and on November 27th the powerful Cardinal Latino Orsini, an uncle of the bride, expressed his joy to Piero that all was

settled. The contract was drawn up partly in the Roman, partly in the Florentine style. The dowry was to be 6,000 ducats. The Archbishop, like Lucrezia, has no eye except for the physical qualities of the young lady. Giuliano went to Rome with nine young Florentines in May to fetch the bride and the visit was a triumph. The ceremony in Florence was fixed for June 4th.

Lorenzo is, as usual, matter-of-fact in his notes. "I, Lorenzo, took Donna Clarice, daughter of Signor Jacopo Orsini, to wife, or rather she was given to me, in December, 1468, and the marriage feast was held at our house on June 4th, 1469." The tone is that of the day. Lorenzo, like his bride, knew that it was his duty to accept the mate chosen by his parents. From the first he was a bad correspondent and his uncle had to urge him to write to Clarice, since he could not visit her. She was enceinte when he made his note and he adds a pious wish such as we find often in the Florentine diaries that God may long spare her and long protect her against all peril.

The marriage festivities in Florence were on a great scale. Clarice was entertained by Bernardo degli Alessandri. Generous gifts of food and wine, wax and sweets were soon pouring into the palace in the Via Larga. These were passed on to the friends and supporters of the Medici, among the gifts being 4,000 hens and capons and 150 calves. On the great day Clarice rode to the home of her husband on a horse from the excellent stables of Ferrante of Naples, dressed in white and gold brocade and wearing a splendid cloak in the Florentine style, preceded by fifers and tabourers and escorted by Messer Carlo and Messer Tommaso dei Medici. With her came thirty richly dressed matrons and maidens and contingents from all the leading Florentine families. The Via Larga in front of the palace had been turned into a ballroom and here another bevy of thirty matrons and maids of distinction welcomed her, while the

usual symbolical olive tree was shot up to the top storey of the palace. There is a homely touch about the festivities that distinguishes them from similar ceremonies at the Italian courts.

The arrangements for the banquet are interesting. Age and sex were carefully separated. In the *loggia* above the garden was the bride with fifty of the younger matrons. Under the colonnade, where the bright sunshine lit up the colours of the dresses, flickered over the silver and slowly moved across the court, were seventy of the foremost citizens of Florence. In the main hall were thirty-six of the younger men, while on the first floor *Monna Lucrezia* presided over some forty of the older dames. Forty young men from the chief merchant families acted as stewards and so perfect was the organization that the dishes, brought in by the main entrance to the sound of trumpets, reached every table at the same moment. The scene calls up some of the great Renaissance paintings of banquets and wedding feasts. In order to set a good example there was no undue lavishness. For dinner there was soup, a boiled and a roast meat, with cakes and sweets; in the evening a roast only, also with cakes and sweets. Malmsey and the rough Tuscan Trebbiano that went well with game were the wines served at table, but there were also choicer wines. The silver plate, again, was limited to spoons, forks, which were already in use in Italy, knives, salt-cellars, wine-coolers and ewers. In the centre of the court were tables with glasses and great brass bowls, where the cellarers distributed the wine and the water to those who were serving, and also round the fountain as it rose and fell in the sunshine in the garden. Only one shower marred the two and a half days of the feast, but it was so sudden that it damaged not a few rich dresses.

In all some four hundred guests of note were entertained. Elsewhere in the palace and at the house of Messer Carlo dei Medici were covers for about

a thousand guests of less mark. There was also an ample meal for any respectable citizen of Florence who came to offer his congratulations.

The more important guests arrived in the morning, dined and then rested for a while. Afterwards there was dancing in the ballroom in the street outside, which was covered with cloth adorned with the Medici and Orsini arms. Of the wedding presents, by no means the least valuable was an Office of the Virgin, written in gold on a blue ground, ornamented with miniatures and bound in crystal and silver. Clarice had it with her when she went to Mass in full state on the second day. Afterwards there was jousting, a sham fight and the storming of a fort. Lorenzo threw himself into all the preparations and the festivities, being, as usual, the life and soul of the whole thing.

In July Lorenzo went with his two brothers-in-law to Milan as proxy for his father to stand godfather to the first-born of the young Duke, who was afterwards to be the unhappy Duke Gian Galeazzo Sforza. Piero had been unwilling to let him go, as he did not wish to give the mission too much importance. There is a touch of annoyance in his letter from Careggi to his wife : he bids her tell Lorenzo that he is not to go beyond his instructions or to "make too many oranges", i.e. too much display. The mission, of which Gentile Becchi wrote an interesting account to Clarice, was very successful. The "oranges" were none of Lorenzo's seeking ; they were rather thrust upon him by his position. At Lucca, for instance, he put up at the Albergo della Corona, outside the town, where six citizens sent by the Signoria found him receiving personal friends. They told him how disappointed they were, insisting on giving him an official reception. His admirable speech went, we are assured, straight to the hearts of the people. He was also sent a number of eatables as presents and was at last obliged to unpack his plate and entertain some of

the chief citizens. At Pietrasanta he supped under a pergola with a beautiful view of the sea and the fertile plain, which he certainly enjoyed. No wonder he was well and merry. He passed through the strong town of Sarzana and saw the powerful fortress of Sarzanella, built by the great soldier Castruccio Castracani, which Piero had recently acquired. At Milan he was received as became an old family friend and his magnificent present to the Duchess so delighted Duke Galeazzo Maria that he declared that Lorenzo must be godfather to all his other children. From Milan he wrote Clarice a few hurried lines :

" I have arrived quite safely and am well. I am sure this will please you more than any other news, except that of my return, if I may judge by my own longing for you and to be back again. Be nice to Piero, Mona Contessina and Mona Lucrezia. I shall finish here as quickly as I can and be back with you, for it seems a thousand years since I saw you. Pray God for me and, if there is anything you want here, let me know before I leave. Milan, July 22nd, 1469."

An unfortunate misunderstanding occurred about this time with the Duke of Milan. Piero appears to have been much less guarded in his talk than Cosimo. His gout may have made him irritable. The Duke heard that he spoke of him openly without any respect and, vain as he was, he was vulnerable enough in all conscience. He refused to hold any communication with Piero, saying that he was not his equal. All business was to be done through the Signoria. Ultimately a reconciliation was effected. Galeazzo Maria needed the Medici as much as they needed the Sforzas.

This misunderstanding occurred just before Piero died at Careggi on December 2nd, 1469, aged fifty-three. He was buried in S. Lorenzo with great simplicity, as he had wished. With his brother Giovanni he lies in a fine, simple tomb of porphyry,

designed by Verrocchio, in the old Sacristy. His estate, Lorenzo tells us, was valued at 237,988 scudi. Few things are more difficult than to compare the value of money at different periods, but the Italian scudo (crown) cannot have been worth less than £4 of our money to-day. Following family tradition, Piero made no will. In 1451 half the family property had been assigned to Pier Francesco, head of the younger branch. Lorenzo says that the arbitration gave him distinctly the better share.

CHAPTER IX

FIRST YEARS OF LORENZO'S RULE (1469-78)

IN spite of their youth, Lorenzo and Giuliano were in a more assured position on the death of their father in 1469 than he had been on the death of Cosimo ; for one thing, Piero's success had accustomed people to the idea of the Medici position being hereditary. Much depended on Tommaso Soderini, who had married a Tornabuoni. Piero had told his sons to trust him, nor did he betray their trust, though it has been said that he might have made himself supreme, had he cared to do so. He bade those who came to visit him go to the Medici palace. Immediately on Piero's death more than six hundred of the leading citizens assembled in the church of S. Antonio. Soderini addressed them and told them that, out of respect for Cosimo and Piero, who had done so much for the state, they should confer the same rights upon Lorenzo and Giuliano, who were grown up and possessed of wisdom and ability. Two speakers said outright that a head was needed to deal with public business in an authoritative manner. There was always a possibility of danger from the exiles. Such words sound strange in a republic like Florence, but they reflect the true state of affairs. The Medici were the necessary constant element in the ever-changing stream of magistrates and councils, the appointment to which they generally controlled. The best brains in the state realized that something of the kind was needed if only for the management of foreign affairs and in time of war.

The decision to make no change in the government was expected and very popular, meeting with virtually

no opposition. Two days after his father's death, writes Lorenzo, though he was only twenty-one, the chief men of the city came to condole with him and to ask him "to undertake the care of the city and the state, as my grandfather and my father had done". He adds that he consented unwillingly and "only in order to preserve my friends and our property, because it is difficult for a rich man to live in Florence unless he controls the state". This was no idle boast. Lorenzo was young and brilliant, highly gifted intellectually, a man of the most varied interests with the keenest zest for life, and he would certainly have been glad to have had a father to bear the responsibility for some years longer. Though he would never have been content to hold any but the first place after the education he had received and with the traditions he had inherited, he might, in other circumstances, have been happier in a private station, as his outbursts in later life, when his health was failing, seem to show. But he knew only too well the fate that awaited his family and party if their enemies came into power. He adds in the note in his diary, written two years after his accession, that between 1434 and 1471 the Medici had spent the huge sum of 663,755 florins on building, in charities and taxes, nor does he regret the outlay.

Lorenzo and Giuliano had been educated very differently from their elders. Cosimo's sons had been brought up like himself to be merchants and bankers, but, except in the case of a genius like Cosimo, a merchant cannot, like a landed magnate, make politics a whole-time job without neglecting his business. The two lads had had no commercial training. Lorenzo's first recorded public appearance during the visit of Pius II is prophetic. He was brought up more like a prince of a reigning House of the full Renaissance, trained to follow in his father's footsteps as the first citizen of Florence, not as its leading banker and broker. He had early made the round of the

chief courts of Italy, where he had been genuinely liked, though he also kept an eye upon the family business and its agents in the capitals he visited. Here again the Medici evolved much like their friends, the Sforzas. Cosimo was a banker, Francesco a condottiere, both being at the head of their professions, but the younger generation had had no professional training and Lorenzo and Ludovico were destined to preside over two of the most brilliant centres of the Italian Renaissance.

On his father's death Lorenzo immediately appealed to Milan for support, which was duly promised, and by Christmas, 1469, Sacromoro, the Duke's ambassador in Florence, could write that the Medici seemed firmly seated in the saddle. He had given Lorenzo some advice, urging him to let it be seen that he was not like his father, neither affecting so much superiority, nor imitating his manner, because this would only alienate people. Was he thinking of the unwise way in which Piero had talked of the Duke? But Lorenzo must also be careful not to be too humble. Foreign rulers seem to have taken the succession for granted, writing to Lorenzo as to one of themselves. Louis XI, who had thanked Piero, his good friend, for deigning to do him the honour of accepting the grant of the *fleurs-de-lis* on his arms, made Lorenzo his Councillor and Chamberlain and conferred all the usual honours upon him. Lorenzo had meant to ask the Duke of Milan to stand godfather to his second daughter, but Louis would not forego the privilege.

A special grant of 300,000 florins put the new government on its legs financially, and the Ferrarese ambassador, who was shrewd enough to see that the prestige of the Medici depended largely on their prestige abroad, proved right in his prophecy that their friends would make it easy for Lorenzo and Giuliano to step into their father's shoes. From the very first Lorenzo showed no hesitation in the course he meant to adopt. Young though he was, it is

difficult to believe that the changes introduced with a view to giving the family a more complete control of the state were not largely of his devising. The admirable training he had received, aided by his great gifts, enabled Lorenzo at twenty to grasp and deal with a political situation before which able and experienced statesmen might have quailed. He stepped almost automatically into the first place. Giuliano was too young to play an active part in politics, nor is it likely that, with his easy-going, pleasure-loving nature, he would ever have become his brother's rival, or even seriously opposed him. True to family tradition, they would have known how to get on together. Nor did Lorenzo fail to keep on good terms with the younger branch of the family, of which Pier Francesco was the head. Indeed, during these early years, his one idea was to conciliate and make friends.

The first attempt to change the constitution in 1470 came to nothing, owing to the strength of the opposition, but in July, 1471, some important measures were passed. Briefly, a temporary council was appointed to carry through a scrutiny of the magistrates for the next five years. Then fifty names were chosen from among the Gonfaloniers between 1434 and 1471, who, with the *Balia* of forty, were to select a Council of One Hundred, which was thus wholly in the Medici interest. The object was said to be to simplify the work of dealing with Foreign Affairs and certainly the new council was much more efficient and stable. It immediately superseded the older councils and became the supreme authority in the state. At the same time the powers of the *Otto di Guardia* were increased at the expense of the other judicial bodies : they were carefully chosen and were always in the Medici interest. Lorenzo thus secured a firm hold on the judicature.

His methods were largely those of Cosimo, the methods which became traditional with the family.

They are formulated in the letter of advice prepared for his grandson, Lorenzo, when he was entrusted by Pope Leo X with the government of Florence.¹ Each different Council is dealt with in detail. First and foremost, he must have a man of his own on every one of them, whom he can trust to tell him everything. If he allows anyone not of his party to be a member of the Signoria, he must see that he is neither a man of character, nor of much ability. The men on the *Monte* commission must be rich and of good standing, because the *Monte* is the heart of the city. On all important boards there must be a good Medici majority. As to his general attitude, Guicciardini bears witness that Lorenzo often took measures that were contrary to his whole character, with its generosity and magnanimity, most unwillingly, almost with tears in his eyes.

In other ways Lorenzo was beginning to show his hand. He was always ready to ask advice, saying that he could thus use other people's brains as well as his own, but, like Queen Elizabeth, he consulted his friends separately, making it clear that he meant to take all decisions himself. He readily sent members of the older families on embassies and foreign missions, but, like Cosimo, he preferred new men of his own choosing for his trusted counsellors. Tommaso Soderini, of whose influence he was jealous, was kept in the background. Lorenzo used to say that, if Piero had done the same and been more firm with Luca Pitti and his friends, he would not have come near to losing the state in 1466. Of these new men Antonio Pucci was the chief.

Perhaps the way to these changes was smoothed by the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Milan to Florence in March, 1471, the splendour of which stands out as a memorable event even in the Quattrocento. The Milanese chronicler, Corio, who revels in the cloth of gold and silver, the gorgeously caparisoned horses

¹ *Arch. Stor. Ital.*, 1842, App. I.

and the gold chains, says that there had been nothing like it within the memory of man. In all the Duke brought two thousand horses. Naturally Lorenzo was not going to let himself be outdone. The principal guests were lodged in the Medici palace and the Duke was once again impressed with its magnificence, as well as with that of the art collections. He frankly admitted their superiority to his own, since their value lay in their intrinsic quality and rarity, not in their monetary worth. During one of the sacred representations given in his honour the church of S. Spirito caught fire. People thought that this was a sign of the wrath of God because the Milanese ate meat in Lent, like unbelievers. But Florence was gratified when the Duke, who was lavish with his money and whose suite behaved irreproachably, gave 2,000 ducats towards the rebuilding fund, a sum which greatly helped the progress of the new church of which Brunelleschi was the architect. According to Machiavelli, this visit was disastrous in increasing luxury and extravagance in Florence. "If the Duke found the city of Florence filled with courtly delicacy and manners and customs that accorded ill with a well ordered civilization, he left it far worse."

Giuliano returned the visit and was splendidly entertained in the Duchy, being taken to the chief castles. There was a constant interchange of letters between the two courts. Relations continued close, though at times they were a little strained. The Duke of Milan was continually urging Lorenzo to trust him and not Ferrante of Naples, with whom Lorenzo nevertheless corresponded surreptitiously. Federigo of Urbino acted as postman, pledging his word for the loyalty of the King. In 1472 the Duke of Milan asked Lorenzo for a loan of 20,000 ducats. Lorenzo was already in financial difficulties, but dared not refuse. His ambassador congratulated the Duke on timing his demand so well. "May he see what will happen to him, if you withdraw your hand. He will

learn to be more humble and not have a foot in every camp. . . . Perhaps this difficulty will bring him to his senses and teach him gratitude." Clearly the Duke, who was jealous of Lorenzo's growing prestige, endeavoured to treat him as his protégé.

In 1471 died Pope Paul II. He was succeeded by Sixtus IV (Della Rovere), a monk of peasant origin, on whose behalf Milan exerted all its influence, for he was a subject of the Duke. "In September, 1471, I was chosen ambassador to Rome for the coronation of Pope Sixtus IV. I brought back two antique marble heads of Augustus and Agrippa, which the said Pope gave me; also a chalcedony vase, engraved, as well as a number of cameos and medals, which I bought." These came from the collection of Paul II who had a passion for gems. The new Pope was glad to find a ready and wealthy buyer and to gratify the young Medici with things by which he set little store. Lorenzo's note shows where his heart lay. During this visit he secured for Giovanni Tornabuoni the treasurership of the Holy See as well as better terms for the alum contract.

Possibly also he broached the question of a red hat for Giuliano, though others refer the event to a later date. There is a letter of 1472 from Lorenzo to the Pope, mentioning the great wish of the Medici to have a cardinal in the family. The cardinal of Pavia, in the following year, warned him that Giuliano must first enter upon an ecclesiastical career and become a Protonotary Apostolic and also pointed out the risk of his branch becoming extinct if anything happened to himself and his brother were an ecclesiastic. The Pope favoured the idea, but it fell through. A red hat would have much increased the prestige of the family besides preventing any possibility of a misunderstanding between the brothers.

Oddly enough, to this very year belongs the only recorded instance of their falling out.¹ Giuliano,

¹ Magnani—*Relazioni private*, p. 60.

having thoroughly enjoyed himself in Milan, decided to spend a month in Venice. The Duke of Milan objected on account of the political construction that might be put upon the visit. Lorenzo tried to reason with his brother, but Giuliano, having already made his very expensive preparations and said good-bye to his friends, was bitterly disappointed and refused to listen. At last both Lorenzo and his mother were obliged to intervene firmly and forbid the trip. Sacromoro writes that Giuliano used language most unusual with him, saying that he was well aware that Lorenzo did not wish him to make a mark or have any standing. Mounting his horse in a huff, he rode off to Cafaggiuolo, where he sulked till a friend was sent to reason with him and point out how a dutiful brother ought to behave. A little later Giuliano went to Venice with the Duke's consent and was magnificently feted. But on his way back the objections to the visit were justified. Hardly had he entered the territory of Ferrara when he was waylaid by some exiles and only just escaped with his life. Giuliano was so young that the incident has no significance.

There was soon real trouble with Volterra. The success of the Tolfa alum mines induced a Sienese syndicate to apply for rights to exploit the mines at Cecina, which had hitherto been worked only intermittently. The contract was granted after much opposition and, as the deposits were soon yielding more than had been expected, the Volterrana authorities declared it illegal and seized the mines. Three Florentines were among the shareholders and an appeal was made to Florence. The commissioners decided in favour of the syndicate, to which the mine was restored, and some of the more turbulent Volterrana were removed to Florence. Then, in a riot provoked by the overbearing conduct of one of the Florentines, two Florentines were killed after they had taken refuge with the Podestà, who was besieged in his palace. The authorities did their best to restore order

and expressly declared that nothing must be done contrary to their duty towards Florence. They also sent an embassy to Florence.

Now it is that we see the disadvantage of Lorenzo having risen to power so young. Soderini urged forbearance and a peaceful settlement, as, indeed, any man of sense and experience would have done, though he thought that the Volterrans should be punished. His attitude may well have helped to turn the scale, for Lorenzo disliked seeming to be dictated to, especially by Messer Tommaso. It has been suggested that he acted as he did because he had a share in the mines, but of this there is no proof and their yields were too unimportant to be worth troubling about. His attitude was undoubtedly popular, for the mob was, as one would expect, shouting for the authority of Florence to be asserted over these insolent rebels.

In Volterra, too, the extremists now obtained control. Florence doubled the number of the Ten of War, hardly the best way to insure efficiency, and the fund for dowerin ; poor girls was raided to the extent of 100,000 florins, a measure which has justly brought odium upon Lorenzo. Volterra appealed to the chief Italian Powers, but they were all allies of Florence. Siena and Appiano of Piombino, whom Lorenzo had attacked, alone sent her help. Volterra frowns down from her proud height above the Maremma, seemingly impregnable, but Federigo d'Urbino, whom the Florentines had engaged to command their forces, had an easy task, since there were not enough troops in the town to man the walls. For twenty-five days the place held out, but her mercenaries behaved badly and the peace party got the upper hand. Volterra surrendered on condition that the lives and property of the citizens should be spared. As was to be expected, it was the mercenaries who were the cause of the trouble that followed. When one of them, said to be in Volterrano employ, robbed a councillor,

an uproar ensued. The troops got out of hand and sacked the town with a brutality with which the inhabitants of less fortunate parts of Italy were only too familiar. Federigo endeavoured to restrain his men, but they were beyond control. Later he hung a couple of the ringleaders.

It is absurd to blame Lorenzo for this sack, for which he was in no way responsible ; it was obviously to the interest of Florence to recover Volterra intact, with all its wealth. He showed his sympathy by himself visiting the place shortly afterwards and distributing 2,000 florins in the name of the Signoria among the victims. In later years he spent large sums on the estates he possessed in the neighbourhood, residing there frequently in order to take the waters of Morba, which were brought to him. Florence, however, was determined to run no risks. Many of the more dangerous inhabitants were sent into exile and the strong castle we still see was built to hold the place down.

To all appearance an era of peace was dawning in Italy, to be marked by the lavishness and splendid extravagance of the day. Florence spent 10,000 gold florins on entertaining that attractive princess, Eleonora d'Aragona, when she passed through the town on her way to become the bride of Ercole d'Este at Ferrara. This is how his ambassador wrote to Ercole in January, 1473 : "There is no news except that, near Pisa, where the Most Illustrious Lorenzo is hawking with King Ferrante's men, two of the ten falcons sent him by His Majesty [Ferrante imported the falcons from Rhodes by special permission of the Grand Master] and those the best have been lost. Your Excellency must not be surprised at my mentioning such matters, for I am only following the fashion. Italy is so quiet that, if nothing fresh happens, there will be more to say about the killing of dogs and birds than about armies and feats of war." Lorenzo had a large estate and a villa, once a fortress, at Agnano,

four miles from Pisa, where there was excellent sport. This he frequently visited.

Guests of importance were often in Florence, where they were lavishly entertained by the Medici, assisted by the Commune. Though the drain on the shrinking revenues was heavy, these visits were thoroughly enjoyed by the people, as everywhere else in Italy during the Renaissance.

A cloud, however, soon appeared on the horizon. Sixtus IV was the first Pope to attempt to carve out a state for his nephews in the troubled Marches. Imola, close to the Florentine border, had passed into the possession of Milan. The Medici tried to acquire it, but neither Ferrante of Naples, nor the Pope, were anxious to see Florence extending her power further towards the Adriatic across the great Southern road. Lorenzo was anything but pleased when Sixtus induced the Duke of Milan to sell him Imola in order that he might establish his nephew Girolamo Riario there, who was also to marry the Duke's natural daughter, Caterina Sforza. He is said to have forbidden Giovanni Tornabuoni to advance the Pope the 40,000 florins for the purchase money and even to have requested Francesco Pazzi, who rivalled Tornabuoni in importance among the Florentine bankers with their offices in the Via de' Banchi, the business centre of Rome, not to do so either. Francesco, known as Franceschino on account of his diminutive stature, was a bachelor, restless, pushing, and self-important. Delighted to score a point over his successful rival, he not only advanced the money, but told the Pope of Lorenzo's request, with the result that he became the Pope's banker instead of Tornabuoni and was soon hand in glove with the ever-impecunious Girolamo Riario. One cannot imagine Cosimo or Piero making such a blunder, nor Lorenzo himself in his later years.

Again, the Pope was anxious to get possession of Città di Castello, also in the Romagna, close to the

Florentine town of Borgo S. Sepolcro. When Vitelli, the Papal vicar, refused to recall the exiles, knowing the fate that awaited him, Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere laid siege to the place. Florence preferred Vitelli for a neighbour to the Pope and sent troops to strengthen Borgo S. Sepolcro. The Pope accused her of aiding Vitelli, which she denied, and protested strongly against his being allowed to remain in Florentine territory after he had been expelled from Città di Castello. Lorenzo answered that he was as safe there as in the Castel S. Angelo in Rome, adding that he regarded the favour of His Holiness as one of the greatest of his blessings and that he had no wish to forfeit it for the sake of Vitelli or of anyone else. He was merely behaving as in honour bound.

Lastly there was the question of the archbishopric of Pisa. On the death of his nephew, Cardinal Riario, who had been archbishop of Florence, the Pope suggested Francesco Salviati for the vacancy; but he gave way when Lorenzo objected, and allowed Lorenzo's Orsini brother-in-law to have the See. But when, in accordance with the wishes of the Commune of Florence—the grounds of the objection are not known—Lorenzo also opposed Salviati's appointment to the vacant See of Pisa, the Pope persisted, whereupon the Florentines refused for some time to let Salviati take possession of his bishopric. Sixtus was, not unnaturally, a little sore at being thus continually thwarted by Lorenzo after all he had done for him. Lorenzo's prestige was none the less high and perhaps the most striking proof of the fact came from France in 1473, when Louis XI thought of marrying the Dauphin to the daughter of the King of Naples and asked Lorenzo to sound him on the subject and even to settle the amount of the dowry. The compliment was great, though the negotiations came to nothing.

Meanwhile the balance of power in Italy was shifting. Lorenzo had long had leanings towards

Venice, while Naples was drawing closer to the Pope. In September, 1474, a league was made between Venice, Florence and Milan, which the Pope and Naples were to be allowed to join. Needless to say they did not accept the offer. Sixtus had put Ferrante under a great obligation by commuting the rights of the Church over his kingdom for the symbolical annual gift of a white palfrey and, in the jubilee year, 1475, Ferrante came to Rome in person as the guest of the Pope. Not that this change interrupted the personal relations between the royal family of Naples and the Medici; indeed there is no other court with which the Medici corresponded so frequently. We even find Ferrante, possibly remembering the proposals made him from France, asking Lorenzo to get his agents at Lyons and Vienne to forward his despatches to Louis XI with his own letters. Lorenzo was also still writing to his friend Ippolita, Duchess of Calabria.

To 1475 belongs the tournament of Giuliano, in which the happy days of the youth of the brothers seem to culminate, before untimely fate carried off its hero, as well as *la bella Simonetta*, with whose name his was now publicly linked; happy days "nel vago tempo di sua verde estate" enshrined in Politian's *Stampe* where they are idealized in a paradise of delight, a lovely dream-world that rises poetically as superior to the harder realism of Lorenzo's poems as do the pictures of Botticelli at their best to those of Ghirlandaio.

In his own way Giuliano was at least as attractive as Lorenzo, who could not compare with him in looks, and possibly even more popular. His eyes were dark and lively, his complexion olive, while his long black hair flowed over his shoulders. Powerfully built, he was passionately fond of all outdoor sports. To the rather effeminate Florentines he seemed rough, but he was loyal and straightforward, scorning all falsehood, all resentfulness, says Politian, and always ready to do a kindness or show courtesy, as indeed was

his brother. But he was also a true Medici in his fondness for pictures, music and all things beautiful, while he had a Florentine's delight in wit and jests of every kind. He had also some turn for poetry, especially for love poetry, but his sonnets that have survived prove that he had none of the genuine gift of Lorenzo. Altogether it is not surprising that, of all the young men who courted her, Simonetta is said to have smiled only upon Giuliano.

This tournament, too, was held in the Piazza S. Croce, partly in honour of the new alliance with Venice. The Duke of Milan not only gave Giulano two splendid horses, but sent his trumpeters to grace the occasion. Other princes also lent horses. There were several foreign competitors. The prize was, of course, awarded to Giulano, but in the judgment of all, says Sacromoro, he most richly deserved it.

The first shadows began to fall in the following year with the death of Simonetta : then on St Stephen's Day the Duke of Milan was murdered as he entered the church of St Stephen in Milan by three conspirators who had carefully rehearsed the deed, in the firm belief that the murder of the tyrant would bring about the restoration of the ancient and long out-of-date liberties of the city. Lorenzo immediately undertook to support Galeazzo's widow, Bona of Savoy, on behalf of her young son, Gian Galeazzo, but the murder was a blow to him, as a strong ruler of Milan was one of his chief assets and it soon became clear that little help could be expected from the distracted Duchy, if he were in difficulties.

Further trouble was brewing with the Pope. At this time Lorenzo had no love for the Papacy as an institution. "For a man in my position division of power is an advantage", he wrote in 1477. "Were it not for the scandal, three or four Popes would be better than one." In that year Carlo Fortebraccio, the condottiere, attempted to seize Perugia, which, though it had been ruled by his father and brother,



Spring, by Botticelli

Uffizi, Florence

Photograph, Alinari

[face p. 132]

was in the States of the Church. The Florentines succeeded in dissuading him from the attempt, since they were endeavouring to get the place into their own sphere of influence, whereupon he joined the Sienese exiles and raided the territory of Siena, which was quite unprepared. At first Florence refused to interfere, saying that it was none of her business. Not till the Duke of Urbino took the field at the head of the Papal army and Neapolitan troops appeared upon the scene did Lorenzo exert himself, and Fortebraccio, who was afraid of being captured, retired. The Pope protested angrily against the tacit support given to Fortebraccio by the Florentines, not was it reassuring for them to see the Neapolitan army in the field, virtually on the opposite side. They knew only too well the damage it could inflict upon their Southern territory. The King was angry, wrote the Neapolitan envoy, because, while Cosimo had always striven to weaken Venice, Lorenzo, thinking himself wiser than his father, was helping to increase her power. Even an admirer of Lorenzo like Valori says that such treatment of his benefactor, the Pope, caused many people to begin to doubt his sense and character.

CHAPTER X

THE CONSPIRACY OF THE PAZZI (1478)

IF Lorenzo had roused the Pope's hatred, the Pazzi, who were to be the ringleaders in the famous conspiracy, had long been unsuccessful rivals of the Medici. They were an old family, one of those whom Cosimo had allowed to enrol among the people in order to recover the political rights which their noble birth had forfeited. Andrea, the head of the house, had, in Cosimo's day, filled various missions and been knighted by René d'Anjou. His handsome son, Piero, who was leading the life of an idle young man of his class, attracted the attention of the humanist Niccoli, who asked him one day what he was doing. He then told him that a son of a citizen of such eminence and a young man of an appearance so prepossessing ought to study the classics ; otherwise, he would never acquire honour and would remain without resource when he lost his youth. Piero, much struck, promised to follow his advice and progressed so rapidly that he was soon held up as a model to his fellows. He spent a fortune on books and antiques. He was also sent on many missions. He behaved with extraordinary lavishness when he went to congratulate Louis XI on his accession in 1462, and was knighted by the king. On his return he was careful to be a day behind his fellows and then made such an entry into Florence as no knight had ever made before. Thanks to his affability and generosity he was very popular. Had he lived, Vespasiano considers that his sense and his influence would have prevented the tragedy. His friendship

with Piero il Gottoso resulted in Bianca dei Medici marrying his nephew, Guglielmo. The affectionate letters from his brother Jacopo, who had also held high office, to Lorenzo, written from Avignon in 1474, when he had Jacopo's taxes lightened, show that the families were then on good terms. But their wealth made the Pazzi formidable rivals, and Lorenzo, who, in accordance with family tradition, had no love of tall poppies, took care to keep them as much as possible in the background.

After Franceschino dei Pazzi's behaviour in the Imola affair it is not surprising that Lorenzo hit back. Franceschino was summoned to Florence to answer certain charges, much to the indignation of the peppery little man. When Giovanni Borromeo died intestate, all his wealth would have gone to his daughter, who had married a Pazzi, had not Lorenzo had a law passed, which was to be retrospective, giving nephews precedence over daughters in cases of intestacy. Thus this large fortune went to his own friends, the young Borromei. Giuliano is said to have protested against this measure, saying they were over-reaching themselves, but Lorenzo, "drunk with youth and power", persisted.

Yet, in 1478, after his nine years' rule, Lorenzo seemed more firmly established than ever; nor were there any signs of the peace of Italy being disturbed, when Franceschino dei Pazzi and Girolamo Riario began to lay the foundations of their plot. The pushing, ambitious, insinuating little banker, with his olive complexion and brown hair, a great dandy in his dress, who had the exaggerated vanity of small men combined with the Pazzi temper, was now the mortal enemy of the Medici, hating Lorenzo as only men of his type can hate. He had become intimate with Girolamo Riario, who was a heavy gambler and needed his money, and soon began to play upon his fears. Florence was the obstacle to his increasing his vicariate in the Romagna and there was a risk that Lorenzo

would try to drive him from it on the death of Sixtus. Lorenzo out of the way, Florence would be powerless. Lorenzo had shown his hand in his behaviour to the Pope. The archbishop of Pisa, Francesco Salviati, a man of no very high character who generally lived in Rome, also had his grievances and was easily induced to join in the plot.

Their first task was to win over Jacopo Pazzi, the head of the House. He too was a gambler, cursing gods and men when he lost : possessed of the Pazzi temper, he would seize the dice-board and bang it over the head of the first-comer. He was deadly pale, says Politian, and his head, eyes, mouth and hands were never at rest. But he had the sense of a good man of business and had no wish to enter upon an enterprise so foolhardy, saying that it was madness for Franceschino to think they could make themselves masters of Florence. Unlike the genial Medici they were unpopular, thanks to their pride. Jacopo would have nothing to do with the plot. The Medici finances were, he said, already in such a state that Lorenzo would soon be bankrupt and ruined without their running any risk. The more money they lent him, the sooner would the crisis come.

According to the confession of Giambattista Montesecco, a captain in the employ of Girolamo Riario, which was made under promise of a free pardon, it was the Archbishop who first approached him. His accounts of the conversations are most vivid and interesting. At last the Pope was sounded in the presence of Montesecco, who was himself, he would have us believe, anything but enthusiastic. Sixtus said he was all in favour of a revolution, but no blood must be shed. When Montesecco answered that this could hardly be brought about without the death of the Medici, he reiterated that he would have no bloodshed ; it was not possible for his office to consent to it. — Though he is a scoundrel and has behaved badly to us, I would not have him killed on any

account ; only a revolution." Without the Medici he could do as he liked in Florence and would have Italy at his feet. He was willing to let Salviati steer the ship, but he must not compromise the honour of the Papacy or of Count Girolamo. But, in spite of his protestations, Sixtus can hardly be acquitted of having been an accessory before the fact.

The conspirators were determined on murder. Montesecco was sent to Florence and his report of the Pope's words seems to have won over Jacopo dei Pazzi, though he was far from sanguine of success. The Saturday before the attempt, in order that no one should suffer loss on his account, he scrupulously paid his debts and restored all goods that had been deposited with him. Renato dei Pazzi alone of the family declined to have anything to do with the plot and retired to his villa. Guglielmo, the husband of Lorenzo's sister, was not let into the secret. Considering the number of the conspirators, it is surprising that nothing leaked out. Arrangements were also made for an advance of troops into Florentine territory both from Città di Castello and from Tolentino.

The difficulty lay in the double murder. It was true that the Medici took no precautions, had no guard and habitually mixed quite freely with their fellows, but it was by no means easy to kill both the brothers. Girolamo Riario began by inviting Lorenzo to Rome to clear up the misunderstandings that had arisen between the Pope and the Signoria, "of which His Highness was the leading member and the Head of the State". Giuliano might be dealt with on his way to Piombino, as there was talk of his marrying the daughter of the lord of the place. But Lorenzo did not walk into the trap and time pressed. Young Raffaele Riario, a nephew of Count Girolamo, aged eighteen and still a student at Pisa, was now made cardinal of S. Giorgio and appointed Legate to Perugia. Though not an accomplice, he was to be used as a decoy. Jacopo dei Pazzi began by inviting

him and the Medici to his villa, but Giuliano was not well enough to come. Then, in all innocence, the cardinal asked to be allowed to see the treasures of the Medici palace in the Via Larga and a splendid entertainment was prepared for him in the most lavish style on Sunday, April 26th, when the brothers were to be murdered. Not till the morning was it known that Giuliano would not be present. The conspirators dared not delay longer, as the troops would be advancing, so plans were changed and it was agreed that the murder should be carried out in church that morning. Mass offered a favourable opportunity for such crimes, since the victims were then completely off their guard.

Here came the next hitch. The resolution of Montesecco, who was to kill Lorenzo, had already been shaken by the kindness with which Lorenzo had treated him, as described in his confession, and he flatly refused to do the deed in church. The priests were not so squeamish. Antonio Maffei of Volterra, whose only motive was his indignation at the way in which Volterra had been treated, and another priest promised to deal with Lorenzo. The change was fatal, for, says the wise Machiavelli, if ever courage and strength of mind are needed, it is in cases such as this, when experienced soldiers steeped in blood often fail. The archbishop, with Jacopo Bracciolini and others, was to seize the Palazzo della Signoria. Lorenzo had already heard Mass, but accompanied the cardinal back to the cathedral, where the archbishop left them at the door, saying that he was going to see his mother. The cardinal took his seat opposite the High Altar under Brunelleschi's dome. The great cathedral was crowded. The more important people stood in and around the choir.

The Mass had begun when it was seen that Giuliano was not there. Franceschino and Bernardo Bandini, the coolest and most fearless of the conspirators, who were to kill him, went back to the Medici palace and

persuaded him to come with them. Franceschino joked with him on the way back and playfully caught hold of him, slipping his arm round him to see whether he was wearing a breastplate. Giuliano could not carry a weapon owing to a sore on his leg. In Italy at this time Mass was largely a social function and the Medici brothers were strolling about different parts of the church, chatting. Giuliano was with his uncle, Giovanni Tornabuoni, and Francesco Nori. At the words *Ita, missa est*, Bandini ran Giuliano through the body. He went on a step or two, then stumbled and fell, whereupon Franceschino, with hysterical violence, stabbed his body again and again. Giuliano received in all nineteen wounds. It is said that, in his fury, Franceschino wounded himself badly in the leg, but others maintained that the wound was inflicted on him by someone else.

Maffei foolishly caught Lorenzo by the shoulder before stabbing him, thus giving him warning, with the result that he only wounded him slightly in the neck. Quick and agile, Lorenzo was on his guard in a moment. Flinging his cloak round his arm to serve as a shield, he defended himself vigorously with his dagger. The priests fled, but Bandini rushed forward, followed by the limping Franceschino. On the way he cut down Nori, a loyal servant of the Medici, whom he hated and who tried to intervene. Lorenzo's friends, recovering from their surprise, began to defend him, notably two of the Cavalcanti. Jumping the rails, he ran past the altar and into the new sacristy, followed by some of his friends, whereupon Politian and others swung to the huge bronze doors and they were safe. There was wild uproar in the crowded cathedral. Many people thought the roof was falling. Above the din Guglielmo dei Pazzi could be heard bawling out that he was absolutely innocent. The boy cardinal was crouching terror-stricken by the altar, whence he was conducted by some priests to the old sacristy. A number of the friends of the Medici

quickly gathered round the door of the new sacristy, where Lorenzo kept asking anxiously what had happened to Giuliano and threatening dire vengeance on the traitors. Not till one of those with him had climbed up to the organ loft to see how matters stood did they venture to open the doors. Meanwhile an armed guard of some strength had been summoned, which escorted Lorenzo home, care being taken that he should not see his brother's body, still lying in the cathedral where it had fallen. Later the cardinal was taken to the Palazzo della Signoria by two of the Otto di Guardia.

The Archbishop had, as arranged, gone to the Palazzo della Signoria with a couple of relatives and some Perugian exiles, about thirty in all. With him was Jacopo Bracciolini, son of the humanist. The Medici had befriended him, but he was a worthless, discontented agitator, desperately in debt, speaking evil of everyone, ready for any enterprise that would give him a chance of venting his spite and retrieving his fortunes—a type that is not uncommon in the Renaissance. Leaving most of his men at the door, Salviati went up and asked for Petrucci, the Gonfalonier, who was dining with the Priors. Petrucci was a soldier who owed everything to the Medici. Once again it was clear that this was no work for priests. Petrucci noticed that Salviati stammered, changed colour and appeared much agitated. Guessing that something was wrong he gave the alarm and the archbishop bolted. Petrucci, darting after him, ran into Bracciolini, seized him by the hair and flung him down. The chain was put across the door of the tower, Petrucci grasped a spit and his men any weapons they could find. They easily warded off the attacks of the Perugians. The great bell, the Vacca, was rung to give the alarm. The men with Salviati had withdrawn into a room below to await orders and shut the door, only to find that it could not be opened from the inside. They were thus caught in a trap.

Jacopo Pazzi, according to plan, rode through the streets at the head of a hundred men, shouting "Liberty! Marzocco!"—the name of the lion of Florence. But there was no response, as Rinuccini, an admirer of Brutus and of the traditions of the Roman Republic, sadly records. "Palle, Palle" was the only cry heard. When he reached the Palace, Jacopo found it barred against him and the Priors themselves began hurling down the stones that were always kept for defence on the roof, upon his men. Seeing the hopelessness of his position, he returned home. He had taken the precaution of securing the Porta alla Croce and shortly afterwards fled towards the Romagna. Franceschino had gone to bed in the family palace, his wound being too serious for him to sit a horse.

The door of the Palazzo della Signoria was at last opened and Petrucci heard of the murder of Giuliano. Several of the prisoners were flung from the windows into the street below, while the more important were hung from them. Franceschino was taken in his bed and brought naked to the Palace, where he was instantly hung. The archbishop had been allowed to confess and was then turned off from the same window as Franceschino. In his death agony he bit at the rope and also at the chest of his fellow ringleader, who was hanging there naked. Several priests in the suite of the archbishop were flung from the windows. The priests who had attacked Lorenzo were not caught for two days, as they had taken refuge in the Benedictine monastery. The mob cut off their ears and noses before dragging them to the Palace, where they were hung. The Benedictines had a narrow escape. A large and enthusiastic crowd assembled in the Via Larga, shouting "Palle, Palle!" Lorenzo had to appear at a window with his bandaged neck and make them a speech before they would go away.

Jacopo Pazzi was recognized and caught in the neighbourhood of the Falterona, at the head of the

Casentino. He offered the peasant who took him seven gold florins to kill him, but he refused. With their tremendous vitality, it was almost impossible for the men and women of the Renaissance to commit suicide. Under torture Jacopo admitted that it was the law upon intestacy that had turned the scale for him and that he had believed, like a true gambler, in Franceschino's luck, for he had been a most successful banker. "And why were you not deterred by the better luck of the Medici?" asked his questioners. Alessandra Strozzi had been wise when she warned her sons that the Medici always prospered, whereas the Pazzi were always unlucky and bade them make no mistake in the family they supported. Jacopo was duly hung and buried in the beautiful Pazzi chapel, by S. Croce, built for his father, Andrea, by Brunelleschi, but it was rumoured that he had died cursing—he is credibly said to have bequeathed his soul to the devil—and some disastrous rains that did much damage were attributed to his having been buried in consecrated ground. So the authorities had him removed and reburied by night outside the walls; but the street boys dug him up and dragged the body about the town by the bit of rope that was still round his neck. They even took him to his own door, the palace at the Canto dei Pazzi, which he had largely rebuilt, knocking his head against it and shouting, "Open to Messer Jacopo dei Pazzi!" Finally, the body was thrown into the Arno.

Montesecco wrote his valuable confession after being tortured, but, instead of his liberty, he was allowed the honourable death of being beheaded instead of being hung. One only of the Archbishop's followers escaped. He had lain hidden for four days under a pile of wood and was allowed to go free, as it was thought he had suffered enough from hunger. In all, some seventy people were killed.

Renato dei Pazzi tried to escape disguised as a peasant, but he was caught and hung. Enemies of the

Medici said that his popularity and his high character told against him, but he was undoubtedly an accessory before the murder, though he all along disapproved of it. Guglielmo, Lorenzo's brother-in-law, was for a time confined, not being allowed to come within five miles of Florence. The Pazzi property was, of course, confiscated and sold by auction and an endeavour was made to wipe them out. They were compelled to change their names and their arms, which were to disappear from the streets within a month. But their dolphins are still to be seen in the Borgo degli Albizzi. Other members of the family, after being imprisoned at Volterra, were released and "confined" a few years later.

Bandini, who had fled to Constantinople, was, at Lorenzo's request, extradited and brought back and hung in his Turkish dress in the following year. Leonardo da Vinci drew a sketch of him. Few things added more to Lorenzo's prestige than this surrender of the murderer of his brother by the Sultan. The Cardinal of S. Giorgio is said to have had an unusually death-like pallor from the shock he endured for the rest of his days and, for a time at least, to have had a trick of feeling his throat where the rope might have come. At first he was confined in the Palazzo della Signoria.

Effigies of the chief conspirators hanging head downwards as traitors were duly painted on the walls of the Palazzo della Signoria by Botticelli, with the usual insulting verses beneath them. This custom was then almost universal in Italy. More interesting were the life-size wax figures of Lorenzo made for the occasion from drawings by Verrocchio and placed in the Church of the Annunziata and in a convent church in the Via S. Gallo, in accordance with custom, as votive offerings. The latter was dressed in the clothes actually worn by Lorenzo when he appeared at the window to address the crowd.

The murder of the handsome, popular, kindly Giuliano, "the prince of youth, the flower of chivalry

and courtesy ", in the prime of his young manhood, so soon after his prowess in the joust, awakened widespread indignation and grief. Many people went into mourning. He was found to have been the father of a boy, Giulio, who was brought up in the family and entered the priesthood. When his cousin, Leo X, gave him a red hat, witnesses were found to swear that Giuliano had married his mother. In due course he became Pope Clement VII.

The conspiracy was of considerable service to Lorenzo. The death of his brother, says Guicciardini, freed him from the necessity of sharing his fortune and his power. His most formidable enemies had been cleared from his path by the arm of the law and all hatred and suspicion of him was allayed. The people took arms in his defence, recognized him as master of the city and allowed him to have as strong a guard as he liked to protect him. " Henceforth he had almost complete control of the city. His power, which had hitherto been great, but suspect, now became very great and secure." One thing is certain, Florence would never have expelled the Medici to put the Pazzi in their place ; nor, if she was to give herself into the hands of a single man, could she have chosen better than Lorenzo, the most gifted and, on the whole, the best of the rulers of the Italian Renaissance.

CHAPTER XI

WAR WITH THE POPE. LORENZO'S VISIT TO NAPLES (1478-87)

THE rage and disappointment of Girolamo Riario when news of the failure of the conspiracy reached Rome knew no bounds and it was further inflamed by the fact that the Florentines had hung an archbishop, imprisoned a cardinal and hung or otherwise made away with a number of other ecclesiastics and their servants. The aged Donato Acciaiuoli was Florentine ambassador in Rome and Girolamo himself went straight to his house to arrest him. He behaved with great dignity, saying that the Florentines would in due course avenge such an insult to their ambassador ; but he thought it best to submit. He insisted on being taken at once into the Pope's presence, where he protested strongly against such treatment of an ambassador. The Pope swore that he had been arrested without his knowledge and ordered him to be set at liberty immediately. There was even talk of placing him in the Castel S. Angelo, but the ambassadors of Milan and Venice declared that they would go there with him.

Acciaiuoli urged his government to place the Cardinal of S. Giorgio at the disposal of the Pope, whom he had informed that he had been arrested to save him from the mob. Florence, however, persisted in keeping him as a hostage for her citizens in Rome. Montesecco's revelations had not only awakened great indignation in Florence, but had also done much to embitter the Pope, furious at being thus publicly gibbeted, against the city, or rather against Lorenzo. On June 1st Sixtus published a bull

excommunicating the Florentines, in which he solemnly rehearsed all the grievances he had against them, but without mentioning the murder of Giuliano. Five days later the Cardinal of S. Giorgio was released. The government consulted a number of theologians, who pronounced the bull to be null and void. All services were therefore ordered to be carried on as usual. As Lorenzo put it to his friend and ally Louis XI, in answer to a letter of condolence on his brother's murder, his only crime against Sixtus was that he was alive, that he had not let himself be killed. Louis talked of calling a Council, but his hands were too full for him to think of sending active help.

Naples, in spite of the personal friendship between Lorenzo and the Royal House, was, of course, with the Pope, and the inevitable war was not long in developing. Federigo, Duke of Urbino, as Captain General of the Church, took command, and with him was Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, the heir to the throne of Naples. Sixtus now set about trying to separate Lorenzo from Florence. When the army reached Montepulciano Alfonso sent forward a trumpeter with a brief which amounted to a confession of the Pope's complicity in the plot. He said that, unable longer to tolerate the tyranny with which Lorenzo had treated the Holy See, he was forced to take measures against him, in order that, once the city of Florence was delivered from the tyranny of the Medici, he might embark upon a crusade against the Turks with all the princes of Christendom—the usual Papal will-o'-the-wisp of the day. When Lorenzo was expelled, he would once more take his beloved city of Florence into favour.

Like Florence, of which he was so true a son, Lorenzo appeared at his best in a crisis. He addressed a large gathering of citizens in the Palazzo della Signoria in an elaborate speech. Of the past he would say nothing, but he was sincerely sorry that a Vicar of Christ, at a time of such danger to the Church, could

stoop to persecute a private citizen with such fury as to attack a glorious republic to which the Church was so deeply indebted. He was as grateful to Florence for defending him so steadily as he was grieved to bring such a disaster, thanks to another's fault, upon a city that was dearer to him than life itself. He had nothing with which to reproach himself and he trusted that the Republic would be speedily delivered from her present troubles. If they thought that his death or exile would serve the common cause, he freely offered his life, his wealth and his children to his country. This speech went straight to the hearts of the people, who gave him a bodyguard of twelve to protect his person.

The Venetians showed their usual worthlessness as allies. They protested vigorously in Rome to the Pope, letting him see that they had no doubt about his motive, and declared their determination to join Milan in standing by Florence. But they refused to take an active part in the war on the plea that it was waged against an individual, though they sent a small contingent. Milan had too many difficulties of her own to do much. Louis XI sent Philippe de Commines to Florence, where he was given some valuable plate, and Rome, but did nothing more than talk. Florence made the best preparations she could, raising money from the banks, heavily taxing the citizens and levying 50,000 gold florins from the protesting clergy. With these sums troops were hired under condottieri.

Siena welcomed the Papal forces. They advanced through the Chianti territory by the Val di Chiana and ravaged wholesale. The Florentine army was at first of poor quality, with little discipline or cohesion, and was outnumbered by three to one. It dug itself in above Poggibonsi. The Duke of Ferrara, Ercole d'Este, was in command. On his way through Pistoia, whither Lorenzo had sent his family with Politian as tutor, the boy Piero rode out to meet him

their numbers, though Commynes told Louis XI that in forming a camp, keeping order and provisioning and organizing a campaign they were superior to the French. The Neapolitans, whatever their faults, were native troops, fighting under their own leaders. They saw their chance. Gathering all their forces at Chiusi, they advanced rapidly up the Arbia valley and surprised the Florentine camp at Poggio Imperiale on September 17th, 1479, the very day when Ludovico Sforza made his peace with the Duchess Bona and entered Milan. A panic ensued and the strong position was seized without a struggle. Costanzo Sforza, who was in the service of Florence, alone showed a spirit worthy of his name. He turned upon Jacopo d'Appiano, Lord of Piombino, who was pursuing him, defeated him and made him prisoner and saved the standard for Florence. He it was who rallied the remnant of the beaten army at San Casciano. Fortunately for Florence, the enemy made no attempt to advance upon the capital. Like a good condottiere Federigo d'Urbino, who commanded the invaders, sat down to besiege Colle, according to rule: it was not in his nature to take risks. But the Florentines had to recall their troops from Perugia, which was on the point of surrendering. From S. Gimignano they gave the Neapolitans all the trouble they could and, at Lorenzo's suggestion, the Priors of the gallant little town of Colle were made citizens of Florence. After holding out for sixty days it was obliged to surrender. In the capital, where plague was again rife, the depression was acute and was increased by the sight of the people flocking back from their villas as the enemy advanced, plundering and burning. But the resistance of Colle saved the situation. Winter came to put an end to campaigning. The enemy were feeling the strain and the losses due to the siege, and at the end of November a three months' truce was agreed to.

The position was grave and Florence was heartily sick of the war. She could count on no more help.

Louis XI, like Milan, had his hands full, and Venice had done all she could or would. Clearly, terms must be made with the enemy. With the family of Ferrante of Naples Lorenzo had, of course, close personal ties, whereas Girolamo Riario hated him as a man hates the rival whom he has tried to make away with by shady means and failed. Ferrante was wise enough to see that peace could be restored to Italy only by an understanding with Florence. Papal policy varied too much with the change of popes to offer the necessary permanence. Lorenzo says himself that for some time Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, to whom most of the success of the allies was due, had been urging him to throw himself upon the mercy of his father. He had hoped that Ludovico Sforza, now the virtual ruler of Milan, would help him effectively, but Milan was not strong enough to do so. Ludovico told Lorenzo plainly that Venice was never known to exert herself to help an ally, preferring to make capital out of his troubles. He would support him in his negotiations with Ferrante, but, if he refused to enter into them, the responsibility was his own. The French ambassador in Naples also wrote to Florence that Ferrante was ready to discuss terms and Filippo Strozzi, being *persona grata* at court, was sent to Naples to make arrangements; but at his first audience with the king he was told that Lorenzo had decided to come himself.

Ludovico Sforza was amazed at the news and, not having been consulted, by no means pleased, for the last thing he desired was that Ferrante should take his place as Lorenzo's chief support. When he expressed surprise and indignation at his running such a risk—a risk he would never have taken himself—the Florentine ambassador answered that he was sure that His Excellency was pleased that Lorenzo had followed his advice and given proof of the trust he placed in the king by going himself. Lorenzo needed courage to put his head into the jaws of a lion as dangerous as

Ferrante. The treacherous murder of the Conte Jacopo Piccinino, who had gone to Naples with a safe-conduct and a guarantee from his father-in-law, Francesco Sforza, was fresh in men's memories and no one would have been more delighted than the Pope and his nephew to see Lorenzo share his fate.

On December 6th, 1479, Lorenzo summoned a *pratica* of some forty of the most prominent men in the state and told them what he meant to do. Peace was essential to Florence and as it was he who was the object of hatred to her enemies, he should go to Naples to place himself in their hands and see what their intentions were. Next day, from S. Miniato al Tedesco, on the way to Pisa, he wrote a letter to the Signoria, apologizing for not having consulted it; but the times needed deeds, not words. He had also informed the enemy generals of his intention, expressing the hope that he would find things as they were on his return. At Vada, a little Maremma sea-port near Pisa, were two Neapolitan galleys awaiting him, which had been placed at his disposal by Alfonso of Calabria.

Lorenzo had a great reception in Naples. The king sent out galleys to escort his ships into harbour, his tried friend Don Federigo was there to welcome him with Alfonso of Calabria's son Ferrantino, while large crowds had assembled to see him land. His cheerful, engaging expression and his pleasing, unaffected manner won all hearts. The house of the Count d'Alife, facing the Castel Nuovo, was assigned him as a residence. Nowhere in Italy could he have found himself in more congenial surroundings. Scholarship and artistic or literary gifts were hardly less honoured, though the supply of native talent was far inferior, than in Florence itself. Lorenzo laid himself out to be popular, freeing a number of galley slaves, for the Southern kingdom suffered heavily from the raids of the Barbary corsairs, and dowering poor girls from the country districts. He

lived in such style that Valori dared not place on record the amount he spent. He had anxieties enough in all conscience, but he knew how to keep them to himself. The worst news he received in Naples was the seizure of Sarzana by a couple of the Fregosi, a lawless family of Genoa. It was rumoured that they had been countenanced by Alfonso of Calabria. In order to secure their conquest effectively, they sold it to the powerful Genoese corporation of St. George, which owned settlements as far away as the Crimea.

Lorenzo's knowledge and experience, his eloquence, power of persuasion and diplomatic skill, combined with his charm of manner, made a great impression. The Conte di Maddaloni, head of the great House of Carafa, and much trusted by the king, was his firm supporter. Ferrante had always liked Lorenzo, and it is clear that his visit added both to his popularity and his prestige. "Vicit praeSENTIA famam," the man is better than his fame, quoted the humanist king from Claudian. Some of his happiest hours were passed with his old friend Donna Ippolita, Duchess of Calabria. Ferrante called her Lorenzo's ally, as we learn from her letter to him after he had left, in which she says that she is writing to tell him that she is always thinking of him, though she doubts whether he often remembers their walk, which is very beautiful and all in flower. It is dated from the Castel Capuano, July 3rd. This could not have been in the garden of the villa outside Porta Capuana which was begun by the Florentine Giuliano da Maino in 1487. Did Lorenzo ever think how much better a companion she would have made him than Clarice Orsini, how much more readily she would have entered into all his various interests? Probably he was too true a son of his age to expect such companionship from a wife, though he had found it in his mother.

Ippolita continued to correspond with Lorenzo and several of her letters have been preserved. She thanks him affectionately for his efforts to bring about a

reconciliation between her brothers, Ludovico and Ascanio Sforza. This is the last of her letters that we have, written in December, 1486, two years before her death : " I cannot tell you the pleasure it gave me to see your handwriting and I have found even more pleasure in seeing your nephew, as I think he has something of you about him ; and God knows how I long to see you, so that I can thank you with my own lips for all you have done for me and mine ; for I am sure that I could not be more obliged to anyone than to Your Lordship, though you have been acting for yourself, since you know that our affairs are your affairs. Magnifico Lorenzo mio, I do not know how your wife would like your taking so much care of the soul you wot of, for those who indulge in such devotions observe vigils not written in the calendar. However, to obey you, though without sharing the wickedness, I send you the gloves and some other trifles suited to your devotion. If you want anything else, say so, for I am as glad to do anything to please you as I should be for my own brothers."

Obviously Lorenzo has asked her for gloves for one of his mistresses. Was this merely a passing fancy, or were they for Bartolomea Benci, the love of his later years ? Ippolita's letters are as modern as those of Isabella d'Este, to whom she is distinctly superior in her tender kindliness and her genuine gratitude. The spoilt Isabella was always more ready to receive than to give.

The negotiations dragged. The Duke of Calabria, realizing now that he held Florence in the hollow of his hand, disliked the idea of peace. Ferrante saw more clearly. When Lorenzo arrived, Ferrante was so friendly that he expected that they would come to an understanding in no time. Guicciardini will have it that the wily old king waited to see whether there would be a revolution in Florence and when nothing happened, determined to come to terms. But there was always the Pope, who resented these negotiations



Photograph, Alinari

Pallas and the Centaur, by Botticelli

Uffizi, Florence

and insisted that, for the honour of the Papacy, Lorenzo must come to Rome and implore his forgiveness. Since Lorenzo was in Ferrante's hands, it was his duty to make him. Ferrante would not have let Lorenzo go, had he wished to do so, since his life would not have been safe in Rome. However, by the end of February, 1480, terms were virtually settled and Lorenzo could leave for Gaeta. He must have heaved a sigh of relief to feel himself out of the hands of his late enemies, however well they had treated him.

Florence went wild with delight over his return, people embracing each other in the streets for joy. As he entered the city he gave his hand freely to all. Peace was formally proclaimed at the feast of the Annunciation. The miracle-working Madonna dell' Impruneta was brought into Florence for the occasion and carried in solemn procession to the cathedral. Florence surrendered some places in the Chianti to Siena and Alfonso of Calabria was compensated with a condotta of 30,000 florins : also, the Pazzi imprisoned in Volterra were released. Ferrante refused to do anything about Sarzana, saying that it was not his business. There was some grumbling, but the terms were recognized as good for a beaten side.

There was still the Church to be reckoned with. Sixtus ratified the peace, unlike Venice, which renounced her alliance and came to terms with the Pope. After Lorenzo had left Naples Ferrante had urged him to return, as he had received favourable proposals from the Pope and it would be as well not to offend him by going on his way. Lorenzo, however, thought otherwise. Sixtus still insisted on his coming to Rome, but even the Duke of Ferrara advised him not to do so. But God, says Machiavelli, who always had a special care of Florence in time of trouble, ordained an event quite unexpected, which gave the King, the Pope and the Venetians something else to think about than Tuscany. This was the capture of Otranto by the Turk, which occurred so

opportunely that it is not surprising to find it asserted, quite untruly, that he came at the suggestion of Lorenzo. Alfonso of Calabria was obliged to give up his schemes in the Sienese and Siena was as glad to see the back of the tyrannous oppressor as the Florentines. Sixtus now adopted a very different tone, imposing no conditions on the embassy of twelve that came to Rome. After being received in a secret consistory, they duly made formal submission to the Pope outside S. Peter's and asked his forgiveness. The speeches were drowned by the noise of the crowd, but the Pope reproved them with no little severity for their misdeeds. Then he touched each of them on the shoulder with a penitentiary wand, once more they kissed his feet and received his blessing, the doors of S. Peter's were thrown open and they attended High Mass.

The most notable memorial of Lorenzo's visit to Naples is Botticelli's beautiful allegorical picture of Pallas taming the Centaur.

It was after his return from Naples that Lorenzo's authority in Florence became virtually absolute; though he did not change his methods, he ruled "a bacchetta", with the rod, as Guicciardini puts it. In 1480 the constitution was drastically reformed. Briefly the Signoria carried through a measure establishing a Council of Seventy, which controlled the elections, as well as the government. The Seventy themselves filled any vacancies in their ranks. Foreign and military affairs were managed by a committee of eight, the Otto di Pratica; another committee of twelve took charge of finance. Even the Otto di Balia, the supreme judicial authority, became a committee of the Seventy, thus giving the Medici an even firmer hold on the judicature. A private individual might not even petition the Seventy. All the old cumbersome machinery of the constitution was left intact, but the other councils had no real authority.

A plot to assassinate Lorenzo in S. Pietro del Carmine on Ascension Day, hatched by Baldovinetti and Battista Frescobaldi, also strengthened his hand. Frescobaldi had worked hard to secure the extradition of Bernardo Bandini when consul at Constantinople and his grievance was that he had not even been repaid his out-of-pocket expenses. When the two conspirators were condemned many people went to comfort them, but any attempt upon Lorenzo's life was henceforth made a capital offence.

The recapture of Otranto from the Turks, due to the civil war that broke out between the two sons of Mahomet II after his death, not to any merits of Alfonso of Calabria as a general, put an entirely different face upon Italy. The peninsula was soon disturbed by the War of Ferrara, which was supported by the allies when attacked by Sixtus and Venice. At first fortune favoured Ferrara, but Alfonso of Calabria was utterly defeated at Campomorto, near Velletri, and only saved by his Turkish bodyguard. Whether from fear of a threatened Council or from dread that Venice might become too powerful, Sixtus now changed sides. Lorenzo attended the Council held at Cremona in 1483 in person. The Florentines were perturbed at his thus putting himself within reach of Girolamo Riario and Louis XI warned him of the risk. Here, too, his dignity, eloquence and personal charm made a great impression, though Ludovico and Ascanio Sforza, Alfonso of Calabria and Ercole d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, were also at the gathering. Ferrara was ultimately saved by Ludovico Sforza and Venice coming privately to terms at Bagnolo without consulting their allies, each thinking only of their own interests. Disgust at the peace is said to have killed the Pope.

In 1483 Louis XI died after inducing his good friend Lorenzo to send him, in addition to all the other reliques he had collected, the ring of S. Zenobius which belonged to a Florentine family. Even then

he had to ask whether it really was the ring and whether Florence possessed any other miracle-working relics.

In 1482 Lorenzo had lost his mother and he was at no pains to hide the gap that the death of that remarkable woman made in his life. He sent 27 letters announcing the fact to various rulers. "I am plunged in grief," he wrote, "I have lost not merely a mother, but my only refuge in many troubles and the comfort of my labours." The Florentine envoy in Rome warned him to look out for conspiracies "now that your mother is no longer there to save you from them, as she used to do". A priest who knew her well wrote that on occasions her actions were politically wiser than his, for he heeded only big matters, whereas she concerned herself also with the small. She sought and gave advice among the most important people and admitted the humblest to her presence. "But you know all this better than I do, for you never did anything without consulting her, nor did she act without learning your views." The bond between them was unusually close. The portrait of her in Berlin is generally thought to be by Botticelli.

The new Pope was Giambattista Cibo, a Genoese, who called himself Innocent VIII. It was hoped that he would prove peaceful after the aggressive Sixtus. He was at first completely under the thumb of Giuliano della Rovere, the strong-willed Cardinal S. Pietro in Vincula. With the Florentine embassy of congratulation went Piero dei Medici, aged thirteen, to whom Lorenzo gave characteristic instructions. "Whenever you find yourself in the company of the other young men of the mission, behave gravely and politely and treat them properly as your equals, being careful not to take precedence of anyone older than yourself; though you are my son, you are only a citizen of Florence, like the rest." Had he already noticed signs of Orsini pride in the lad? Piero is carefully instructed how to behave, if he has a private audience of the

Pope. He is to say that Lorenzo is determined always to obey His Holiness, as he knows what it means to be without his favour, though he does not think that the persecution to which he was subjected was altogether his fault. He is also to say that love for him makes Lorenzo commend to him his little son Giovanni, whom he is trying to bring up to be an honour to the priesthood. All his hopes for the boy rest with His Holiness. Piero is to obey Giovanni Tornabuoni absolutely and not to open his mouth without his advice.

In the war that followed between the Pope and Naples, when Innocent refused to continue the remission of tribute granted by Sixtus, Florence, as in duty bound, supported Naples. But Alfonso of Calabria was so hated that only a powerful speech by Lorenzo induced her to consent. He even told his ambassador in Naples that Alfonso's reputation for cruelty, however undeserved, wounded his very soul and urged that he should be more merciful in taxation. A penny paid cheerfully was worth ten wrung out unwillingly. When actually within striking distance of Rome Alfonso suddenly left his army and rode to Montepulciano with the idea of seeing Lorenzo ; but Lorenzo was in great pain from gout and possibly, in any case, had no wish to meet him. As on other occasions, he let his tongue run away with him, refusing to see him and exclaiming that, since things were going badly, he would have nothing more to do with business. And he went off to Pisa, writing to the Duke of Ferrara for some falcons, as he was short of birds. Outbursts such as this, generally due to a bad attack of gout, show how irksome he often found the responsibility and the work of government.

Lorenzo had all along been in communication with the Pope and was most anxious for peace, especially when Innocent talked of reviving the Angevin claims on Naples. He had no wish to have a foreigner in Italy. In his own time of trouble, when Louis XI

talked of sending help, he had written that he would not put his personal advantage before the danger to Italy. "May God grant, that the idea of trying his strength in this country may never enter the head of a king of France," adding only too truly, "When that happens, Italy will be lost." Though Lorenzo had nothing to do with the peace negotiations, Ferrante thanked him for his efforts. It was about this time that he burst out against the Pope, saying that the States of the Church had always been the ruin of Italy. These ignorant priests, without an idea of how to govern, were a danger to the whole world. Again, this must not be taken as a deliberate, considered judgment, however much truth it may contain.

Though Lorenzo declared that Florence had no intention of trying to recover Sarzana at once, Genoa decided to take the initiative. Thereupon Florence raised a strong force. Little progress was made with the siege till Antonio Pucci appeared upon the scene as a commissioner and said that it was a disgrace that an army of such strength should fail. His kindness to the men—he cheered and kissed the wounded—to say nothing of his liberal presents of gold, had such an effect that the assault that followed was irresistible. Lorenzo, who was at Pisa, came over to spend the last fortnight of the siege in camp. He received a great ovation on his return to Florence after the fall of Sarzana. Malaria had played havoc with the army, Antonio Pucci being one of the victims.

CHAPTER XII

FAMILY EVENTS. LORENZO'S FRIENDS

INNOCENT VIII was the first Pope to acknowledge his children and bring them to the Vatican. He was the father of at least one son and one daughter, born at Naples before he entered the priesthood. Satirists gave him a family of eight of either sex. The Medici could not yet hope to marry into one of the reigning houses of Italy, but, with a view to cementing his friendship with Innocent, Lorenzo arranged a marriage between his daughter Maddalena and the Pope's son, Franceschetto Cibo. The match was well received by his allies, as he told the Neapolitan ambassador, adding, "May God grant that it turn out for the best and prove of advantage to ourselves and to others, for I am well aware that these things are judged by results, not by reason."

Clarice was now far gone in consumption and her health was giving serious cause for anxiety. In the hope that her native air might do her good, she started for Rome in April, 1488, with the bride, her son Piero, the Bishop of Arezzo and others. With her was also Matteo Franco, the only one of her husband's friends to whom she was genuinely attached. His duties were, as usual, multifarious. On the journey she wrote that no one should spend a farthing of hers but he, nor would she touch any food that had not passed through his hands.

Lorenzo's friends were as varied and many-sided as himself. If he could talk philosophy with Landino and Ficino, or architecture with Giuliano di San Gallo, he was too true a Florentine not to delight in the

mocking, biting, irreverent wit in which his countrymen excel ; and in whatever company he found himself Lorenzo naturally took the lead, not from his position, but from that personal magnetism of which one is still conscious when looking at his portraits. Of his intimates Luigi Pulci—the indispensable Gigi—and Matteo Franco were the closest.

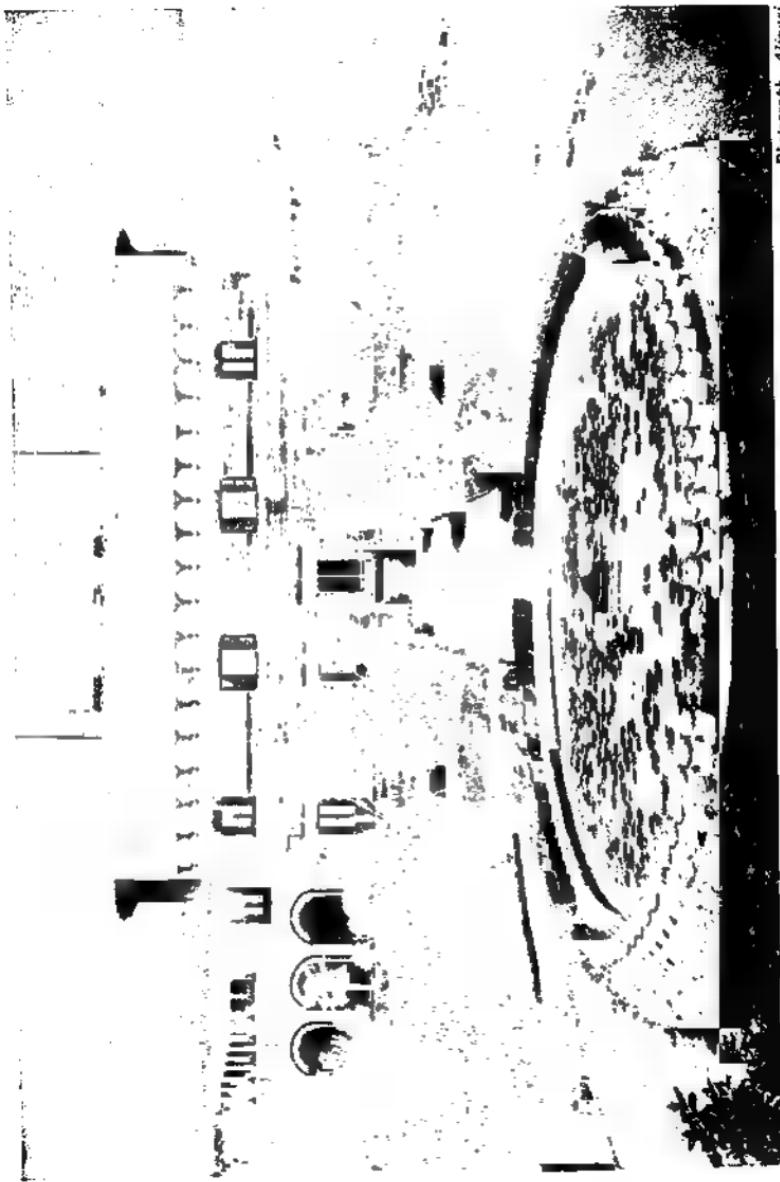
Pulci was probably more intimate than Franco and even more of a congenial spirit. For one thing he was a much older friend. He belonged to the elder generation, being sixteen years senior to his patron, whom he had known from childhood ; indeed, Lorenzo must have heard him read the cantos of his *Morgante Maggiore*, like a popular story-teller, one by one, as he finished them, in the family circle presided over by Lucrezia Tornabuoni, while still a boy : possibly, as he grew older, he, too, ventured a suggestion about the adventures that were to have a place in the next. He fully appreciated Pulci's inexhaustible wit and good humour, as well as his genuine affection for himself. A number of Pulci's letters to Lorenzo have been preserved. Their lively wit, irony and gaiety show him a kindred spirit with the author of *I Beoni* and the *ballate*.

All the three Pulci brothers wrote verse, the poem on Lorenzo's joust being usually ascribed to Luca. Luca failed in business and ended his life in the Stinche as a prisoner for debt, with the result that it fell to Gigi to provide for his numerous family and endeavour to straighten out the complicated financial affairs of the whole family. Lorenzo helped him generously, but there is a pleasing absence of the perpetual begging that one finds in so many of the letters from the friends of the Medici.

While Franco's value was primarily domestic, Pulci was a man of position, who was frequently sent on missions. We find him going to Milan—he was a friend of the Sanseverino brothers—and Venice and more especially to Naples, whence he writes in 1470,

Photograph, Altinari

Villa of Canegeci



" You will see that you have with His Majesty the King and with the illustrious Lord Duke (of Calabria) a man possessed of a head and a tongue. I will look carefully into everything." Pulci was liked at court and could soon write how popular Lorenzo was with Ferrante and how much he was talked about in Naples. The first of his letters, written when Lorenzo was only sixteen, brings out his affection for the lad. " If you were here, I would make whole bunches of sonnets, as of cherries, this May-day. Such things would I say that the sun and the moon would stand still in their course to listen to them, as they did for Joshua." When in desperate straits about the family property, which Lorenzo later helped him to save, he wrote : " I was born like the hares and other more unlucky animals, to be the prey of others and to have to be very fond of you, but be very little with you. The more I want you, the more am I kept away from you. But the heavens themselves shall not prevent me being with you somehow : I am always seeing you, always talking to you. . . . To conclude, Lorenzo, I have but to hear that you love me, to be perfectly happy " ; and he sends greetings to the children, all of whom he sees with his mind's eye. He is deeply distressed from fear lest certain sonnets, probably those of Franco, may damage him with Lorenzo. Sincere himself, Lorenzo could recognize sincerity in others and he knew how to value affection such as Gigi's.

Pulci had to the full, probably to a greater degree than Lorenzo, the sceptical, mocking spirit of the time that spared nothing in heaven or earth, that spirit which Machiavelli denounces as a leading cause of the decay of the national character in the preface to his *Mandragola*. The aim of the young Florentine of his day, he tells us, was to dress splendidly, and to appear knowing and smart in his talk. The one who showed most wit in mocking others was looked up to as the cleverest. Both Lorenzo and Gigi, like Machiavelli, had qualities that enabled them in varying degrees to

rise above the evil effects of this destructive spirit of mockery, though Pulci can hold up to ridicule even Ficino's Neo-Platonism.

Perhaps the bantering, if not unkindly tone that prevailed among Lorenzo's intimates comes out as well as anywhere in Pulci's letter describing a visit to Zoe Palaeologa, daughter of the ex-despot of the Morea, when he was accompanying Clarice on a journey to visit her relations in May, 1472.

"I had no time to write you all the news from Rome. Now, in order to obey the rule and give you some scandal, I must tell you that our Madonna recently went to the pardon at S. Agnolo. Then she took us to visit the daughter of the despot of the Maremma, I mean the Morea. . . . Now I will give you a short description of this cupola of Norcia, this mountain of suet that we visited: I did not think there was so much in Germany, not to say Sardinia. We went into a room where this mountain of flesh sat ready on a chair—and she had something to sit with, I can promise you. I shall begin in the middle, the mean where all virtue lies. Note that Madonna Mea or Madonna Cosa are a pair of consumptive ants in the folds of her skin. . . . Two large Turkish tambourines on her breast, an enormous chin, a huge face, sow's chaps and a neck between the tambourines. A pair of eyes that would do for four, set in such layers of meat and fat and grease and lard that the Po cannot boast such banks. Don't imagine that the legs were like those of scraggy Giulio. . . . A noise in the middle, fat everywhere. I don't think I ever saw a carnival show, or anything else so greasy and flabby and fat and funny as this extraordinary old witch. All day they chattered through an interpreter, and a brother of hers, with legs not less serviceable than Jacopo, was dragoman. And your lady, dazzled by this monument, and finding it amusing to talk through a dragoman, said she was so pretty. And Benedetto did nothing all day but say what a clever

little mouth she had and how sweetly she spat. It is true the mouth is small, but Nature generally averages things out. They talked of many things in Greek till evening, but not a word of a meal or drink in Greek or Latin or Italian. She also had much to say to our lady, among other things that the dress she was wearing was skimpy and tight, because this little darling had on one that was full-breasted and loose and must have wanted six pieces of scarlet satin, enough to wind round the cupola of S. Maria Rotonda. Every night since I have dreamt of mountains of butter and fat, suet and greasy rags and everything that is loathsome." There is a good deal more in the same style. Pulci ends up by saying that Clarice behaves wisely and discreetly, like one who has been well brought up. She has behaved like a Sybil and much honour has been shown her.

It is to his *Morgante Maggiore* that we must turn, if we would know Pulci, for it obviously reflects him in most of his aspects. Like Lorenzo—possibly he showed his young patron the way—he sought inspiration in the popular poetry. The *Morgante*, hardly less than the *Nencia*, is the old popular poetry rewritten for *signori* with the addition of Pulci's mockery. A merchant who had enjoyed no scholarly training, he describes the life of chivalry in accordance with his own ideals; but he is a bourgeois with the soul of a poet, "ready to joke, yet at the same time to respond to a noble emotion". Pulci's opinions may have been heretical. His recantations were not accepted as genuine, and he was refused burial in consecrated ground. But his interest in religious questions is obvious. His knowledge of the Bible, most unusual at that time in a man of his type, comes out in his letters. In the introductions to the cantos of the *Morgante*, some of which are more or less parodies of prayers, he is really parodying the methods of the popular story-tellers, not the Bible, as in the imitation of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of

Canto VI ; for they habitually began a canto with a prayer to the Virgin or a saint ; and about those of Pulci there is often a touch of real religious feeling. The views of the fiend Astarotte, which helped to get Pulci into trouble, show a broad-minded tolerance most unusual for that day. In this mock-heroic poem, if we look closely, we are often in touch with the great problem of the Quattrocento, "Christianity struggling with scepticism and denial . . . a mixture of seriousness and irony ", which makes it a true mirror of a time faced with the difficulty of reconciling medieval Christianity with the classical world of the humanists. Like Pico and Ficino and others, Pulci wandered far afield in his search for truth ; he appears even to have practised magic.

If his mother enjoyed the society of these brilliant friends—Machiavelli ranks Lorenzo's fondness for witty and sharp-tongued company among his few faults—his wife thoroughly disliked them. The daughter of a great Roman house, whose pride, austerity and sharp temper were only increased by her bad health, brought up in the stiff, cold, intensely aristocratic and strictly religious atmosphere of the gloomy palaces and castles of the Orsini, she could not be expected to enjoy the easy, familiar, bourgeois society in which her husband delighted. Tradition and education made it impossible for her to appreciate their lively sallies, which often shocked her as cynical and vulgar. There was no real intimacy between her husband and herself. She was not a friend and a companion, still less a trusted adviser, to whom he could turn as he did to his mother. Such companionship between man and wife was the exception in the Renaissance. Moreover, failing health made Clarice depressed and melancholy. She often complains of Lorenzo not writing or not coming to see her when she is in the country with the children : indeed, it is generally Politian who acts as his secretary in sending her the news.

Lorenzo's other intimate, Matteo Franco, had his full share of the mordant wit of the day. At first Clarice seems to have distrusted him as much as the rest. After the quarrel with Politian, when they had already begun to understand each other, she tells her husband that she has no wish to appear in one of Franco's stories, like Luigi Pulci. But once she had learnt to appreciate the sterling qualities of the man, she became as much attached to him as Lorenzo, who called him "one of the first and dearest creatures of my household".

Franco was a priest and a poor one until 1474, at the age of twenty-seven, he attracted the attention of Lorenzo, when his fortunes began to mend. Politian and he were fast friends. Franco's very devotion made him jealous and he cordially hated Pulci, who was more intimate with Lorenzo. Franco was certainly the aggressor and the more bitter fighter of the two in the sonnet-war that broke out between them. He once wrote to Lorenzo, "Gigi is importunate, Gigi is boring, Gigi has the worst of tongues, Gigi is conceited, Gigi is a scandal-monger, Gigi has a thousand faults, as you admit, and yet it is impossible to breathe without Gigi in your house." Doubtless Lorenzo also admitted to Gigi, if, though not so violent, he was sometimes goaded into making similar attacks upon Franco, that Franco had as many faults, for he loved them both and therefore had to listen to their complaints and do his best to humour them. Possibly their quarrels amused him. In any case he would have been of Franco's opinion that there are few things more worth having in this world than the comfort of true friends and therefore found it well worth while to put up with their weaknesses, which were merely the result of the love they bore him.

Franco often acted as escort to Clarice. His letters are as kindly and lively as himself. In 1485 he accompanied her back from the baths of Morba, where she had been with Lorenzo, and he wrote an amusing

account of the journey, when she showed the Orsini in her, to a friend. At Colle, where they spent the night, the authorities brought her handsome presents of food and wine, in addition to some fine speeches, begging her to plead for them with Lorenzo. "Madonna answered very well in a few words, telling them they were not the friends they described themselves ; if they had been, they would have known that they could trust Lorenzo and herself without presents, which were rather for strangers than for good friends. 'First you complain and beg me to plead for you with Lorenzo, urging your poverty and the needs of the district ; and then you spend money on these things. I take the will for the deed and return them all to you. If I kept them, I should only have them distributed here for the district in God's name ; so I give them to you, since your need is greater than mine.' But when the good men protested, Madonna ended by keeping four bottles of wine and a marzipan in order not to give offence."

On approaching S. Casciano they met "a Paradise full of angels of joy", Giovanni, Piero, Giuliano, and Giulio, riding pillion, with their attendants. The moment they saw their mother, the boys jumped down and all ran and flung their arms round her "with such joy and kisses and pleasure that I could not describe it in a hundred letters". Franco, who adored children, was so moved that he had to dismount himself and kiss them twice, "once for myself and once for Lorenzo", who liked to romp with them ; indeed, Machiavelli blames him because "he was often seen with his children, even taking part in their games". "Dear little Giuliano asked with a long O, O, O, 'Where is Lorenzo ?' and when they told him that he had gone to Poggio, he nearly cried. Piero, who has become the handsomest boy, the most graceful thing you ever saw, has the features of an angel ; his hair is rather long so that it stands out a little, which suits him. Giuliano is pink and fresh

as a rose, smooth and shining and clear as a mirror, happy, and with those thoughtful eyes of his. Messer Giovanni also looks well, not much colour, but healthy and natural, while Giulio has a brown and healthy skin." Giulio was Giuliano's bastard son, who was brought up with the family and became Pope Clement VII. All Franco's almost maternal love of children was thenceforward bestowed upon Maddalena.

Lorenzo's other brilliant intimate was Andrea Ambrogini, who called himself Politianus from the Latin name of his birthplace, Montepulciano. His father, after in vain seeking protection, was murdered by his enemies when the boy was ten. His mother sent the ugly, wry-necked little urchin, who later lost an eye, to relations in Florence. His great ability soon made a mark, but he was so poor that the street boys used to laugh at his torn coat and old boots; indeed, he might have had to enter a shop, had not timely help been forthcoming. His Latin version of the Iliad first brought him into notice and it was not long before he was introduced to Lorenzo. He entered the Medici household about 1473, rapidly becoming one of the inner circle, whether in the Via Larga or in the country. Henceforth, except for a brief interval, he lived under the shade of the laurel, "*lauri sub umbra*", as he puts it. Lorenzo was often known as Lauro among his intimates.

Like Ficino, he was given a cottage near Careggi. The Medici even found houses for their "family" round their palace and Argyropoulos, the great Greek scholar, had one in the Via Larga. Later we find Politian writing to urge Ficino to come to Fiesole, if he finds Careggi too hot. Water abounds in the valleys, the winds are cool and there is little glare. "As you approach the villa it looks as if it were shut in by trees, but there is a wide view as far as the town. The district is well populated, but here I find the quiet I like. There is another inducement. Pico

sometimes wanders out of his own grounds, breaks in unexpectedly upon my solitude and carries me off from my sheltered garden to supper. You know what that means, no luxury, but everything just as it should be, savoured with the salt of his talk. You must be my guest ; with me you will find food as good, but wine perhaps a little better, for Pico and I are rivals in the matter of wine." Pico della Mirandola came to Florence in 1484 and had made an extraordinary impression. In later days, after he had renounced all worldly things, Pico was content with mean fare at table, " howbeit somewhat retaining of the old plenty in dainty viand and silver vessel".

Politian was the truest poet of his day. Whether he is writing in Latin or Italian, under his touch Humanism seems suddenly to come to life. The inspiration of the *Stanze* is classical, but it is an admirable Italian poem, pulsating with the life of his time, just as the Latin poems are original poems. Politian wrote Latin as a living tongue, taking his vocabulary from the poets of all ages, and, though not strictly classical, his Latin poems have the vitality of real poetry. The value of this training is manifest in the *Stanze*, " formed, according to Politian's custom, of separate touches, often inspired by his wide reading of the classics, which the closed melody of the octaves binds together, the whole producing a sense of profound spiritual beauty ". They breathe the same sweet idyllic feeling as Botticelli's Spring or The Birth of Venus, both of which were inspired by lines from the *Stanze*, just as both poet and painter were inspired by Simonetta. Politian's influence at the university, where he held a chair from 1480 to his death, as a teacher was far-reaching. He was also much the best editor of his day, carefully collating manuscripts and weighing the value of the readings. When away from Florence he was always on the look-out for new books for Lorenzo.

The *Stanze* are dedicated to Lorenzo,
ben nato Laur, sotto il cui velo
Fiorenza lieta in pace si riposa,

as also are many of his Latin epigrams, which have a touch of the fulsomeness we find in Ficino. Though not a priest, he was licensed to hold benefices and preached in his parish church of Gropina, or rather delivered some of those orations bristling with classical references that were then the rage. He complains that he is continually being bothered to write anything from love poems to sermons for his friends. The vicar of a neighbouring parish, he tells Lorenzo, could not last long, and he hopes that his patron will remember him for it when the time comes, as to him it would be a bishopric. He was not free from the weaknesses of his kind. Vain and touchy, he was greedy of praise, which he certainly deserved more than most; and he was furious when his laudatory epigrams were not rewarded as he thought they merited. But Lorenzo had no more devoted friend and admirer.

Politian seems a strange choice for a tutor to Piero at the age of three. At first in Florence, or in the country in summer, when Lorenzo and his friends were at their villas, all went well. But during the troubles after the Pazzi conspiracy, in 1478, when there was plague in Florence, Lorenzo sent his family, with Politian, Giovanni Tornabuoni and others, to Pistoia. Clarice disliked Politian as much as she did Pulci and probably considered the scepticism and the whole moral tone of the brilliant humanist as anything but suited for a child of seven. Politian was easily bored, Clarice was in poor health and not good tempered, nor, with her upbringing, was she likely to show consideration to a man of Politian's type, however gifted. From Pistoia he apologizes to Lorenzo for the tone of a letter he had written that morning, admitting that want of patience was his worst fault. In another letter he hopes that in a day

or two Piero will send a letter that will astonish his father, as he has a master who teaches writing in a fortnight. Politian wishes he could serve Lorenzo in something more important, but he willingly undertakes the task assigned him.

Later, he begs him to make it clear, either by letter or by messenger, that his authority is in no way to be questioned, so that he can keep the boy up to the mark and do his work properly. In August they are out all day, visiting the gardens round. Giovanni, the future Pope, is on his pony all day long and the people run after him to look at him. Clarice is well, but takes little pleasure in anything except good news from Florence. She hardly ever goes out. They keep watch and guard the gates owing to the plot to seize Pistoia and carry off the family. News was bad and Lorenzo worried and on September 20th Politian writes, "God save you, for it seems to me that everything depends on that. Do not worry about us, as we are very careful. For myself, I shall fail neither in watchfulness, nor in good will. I know how much I owe Your Magnificence, and my love for Piero and the other children is hardly less than your own. If any unpleasantness or unkindness occurs at times, I will try to bear it for love of you, *qui omnia debeo.*"

About November, 1478, they went to Cafaggiuolo, which must have been damp, cold and depressing to a degree in winter, though its strength made it safe. It would be hard to say who was the more unhappy, Clarice, in poor health and worrying about her husband, or Politian, both of them cut off from all society. Just before Christmas he writes Lorenzo that the rain is so bad that they cannot go out and are reduced to ball games for exercise. "Our stakes are generally the soup, the sweet or the meat and the loser goes without: often, when one of my pupils loses, he pays tribute to Sir Humid [i.e. cries]. . . . I stay indoors by the fire in slippers and a greatcoat; did you

see me, you would think me the picture of misery. Perhaps, after all, I am but myself, for I neither do, nor see, nor hear anything that amuses me, so much have I taken out miseries to heart. Asleep or awake, they haunt me. Two days ago we began to spread our wings, for we heard that the plague was gone : now we are depressed again, for we learn that it still lingers. In Florence we have some satisfaction, if only that of seeing Lorenzo come safe home. . . . For myself, I declare that I am sunk in the depths of depression, so lonely am I ; I say lonely, because Monsignore [probably Gentile Becchi] shuts himself up in his room with nothing but his thoughts, and I always find him so miserable and anxious that my depression is only increased by his company. Ser Alberto di Malerba drones out prayers with the children all day long, so I am left alone, and when I am tired of reading, I ring the changes on plague and war, on regret for the past and fear of the future, and I have no one with whom to share my forebodings. There is no Madonna Lucrezia in her room for me to confide in, and I am bored to death."

The letter is a speaking picture of the depressed, utterly bored, highly-strung man of genius. It is easy to realize how much Lorenzo's magnetic personality meant to one of his temperament—timid and fearful, sheltering beneath his laurel, as he pictures himself in the *Stanze*. Clarice's state was no better. Had Lucrezia been there, she would have known how to keep the peace. In April, 1479, Politian complains to Lorenzo that Clarice has changed Giovanni's reading to the Psalter, against his wishes, though, as the boy was destined for the priesthood, there was sense in the change. On May 6th he writes from Careggi that he has left Cafaggiuolo by Clarice's orders. — "When you have heard me, I think you will admit that the fault is not altogether mine." Lorenzo guessed how matters were and stood by his friend, letting him live in his villa at Fiesole, where he wrote

long, interesting letters to Lucrezia, urging her to plead for him. Clarice was very indignant, saying she hoped she would not be caricatured by Franco, like Luigi Pulci, also that Politian would not be able to say that he would live in her husband's house, whether she liked it or not. " You know that I said that if you wished him to stay on, I would consent, and, though I have put up with a thousand insults, if it is by your wish, I will endure them, but I cannot believe that it is true." Lorenzo went himself to Cafaggiuolo to try to make peace, but in vain. From Florence he wrote his wife a sharp letter, beginning " Monna Clarice ", and saying that he was much annoyed that the books had not been given to Messer Agnolo, as he had requested, and bidding her send them at once.

There are several amusing letters from Piero to his father about this time, in which he has obviously been helped by his tutors, chiefly concerning a pony promised him which did not come. In one of them, written in Latin, he describes the family, " Giovanni is beginning to spell. . . . Giuliano does nothing but laugh ; Lucrezia sews, sings and reads ; Maddalena bangs her head against the wall without hurting herself ; Luigia begins to say a few tiny words ; Contessina fills the whole house with her noise." In a letter to her grandmother from the younger Lucrezia, soon to marry Jacopo Salviati, we get an eminently characteristic glimpse of Giovanni asking her to send more sweets, adding that last time she had sent very few.

Politian did not again become family tutor. There appears to have been some misunderstanding with Lorenzo about the time he visited Naples, with the result that he went as chaplain to Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga to Mantua, where he wrote his *Orfeo*. But he was soon back and giving Piero lessons in 1481, though only one of several masters. He also lectured at the university, where he was much more in place.

Maddalena's wedding party was, of course, given a splendid reception in Rome. They were entertained by the Pope at a magnificent banquet, when he presented the bride with a jewel worth 8,000 ducats. Maddalena was just fifteen, Franceschetto thirty-nine, dull and a confirmed gambler, who had once lost 14,000 ducats to Raffaele Riario, the young cardinal who had been imprisoned after the Pazzi conspiracy, at a sitting. It was with this sum that he began to build the magnificent palace now known as the Cancelleria, perhaps the noblest palace in Rome. Lorenzo was not satisfied with Cibo's prospects. As he bade his trusted ambassador, Lanfredini, point out to him, on the death of the Pope he would be a pauper. Franceschetto replied that his father was (not unnaturally) suspicious of any suggestion of his and generally did the exact opposite to what he proposed. He found it easier to obtain favours for others than for himself. Lorenzo must take the initiative and, added the dutiful Franceschetto, prod up the Pope, like an ox.

Lorenzo needed no urging. Having heard that the Pope had been ill, he wrote that, just as St. Francis felt the passion of Christ through the stigmata, so he felt all the pain and suffering of His Holiness in himself, since, apart from all else, "I bear in mind the condition of our Signor Franceschetto and the many other servants of Your Holiness, who, thanks to your honesty and high-mindedness, are left empty-handed, having little share in the good fortune and grace that Our Lord God has so deservedly bestowed on Your Holiness. Should Your Holiness be called away, which Heaven forbid, they too would descend into the tomb." He reminds him how few Popes have reigned five years and not sought to be Popes in fact without regard to the high-minded scruples which, though justified before God and man, may, if he be allowed to speak as his devoted servant, be liable to misconstruction. He should act at once. He prays God to grant the Pope long life that he may

be the better able to set his affairs in order. "It is now time, Most Blessed Father, to deliver these holy fathers from Limbo, that they may not be like the Jews awaiting the Messiah."

To Lorenzo there was nothing incongruous in this remarkable letter blaming the Pope for trying to turn his back on the prevalent simony. It is not cynical. He was a man of his age, as a normal man is bound to be. Had he been otherwise, he could not have represented it so truly. He accepted the doctrines and obeyed the decrees of the Church, but behaved in private exactly as he wished and he was annoyed at the Pope for not doing likewise, especially where his own interests were concerned. In the end it was largely Lorenzo who provided for the couple. He gave Maddalena the Pazzi palace and villa, a dowry of 4,000 ducats—twice as much as he gave his other girls—in addition to leaving her his extensive Pisa estates. He also arranged to purchase the fief of Anguillara, which the Pope conferred upon Franceschetto. He had written Maddalena one of his excellent letters of advice when she left home.

While Clarice was away an embassy arrived in Florence from the Sultan of Egypt. The envoy went to his audience with the Signoria preceded by a giraffe and a tame lion, the emblem of Florence. For Lorenzo there was a fine horse; sheep and rams of various hues, with long, drooping ears and tails almost as large as their bodies; eleven horns of balsam, a great jar of civet and some magnificent vases of porcelain, the like of which had never before been seen, nor better worked; cloth of various kinds, huge jars of preserve and as much aloe-wood as a man could carry. The embassy was concerned with questions of trade and the custody of Prince Djem, the defeated son of Mahomet II, who was ultimately given up to the Pope for safe keeping: his family was in Egypt. The visit was returned next year. The giraffe became a pet of the whole city; it would eat

an apple out of a child's hand. Large fires were lit to keep it warm in winter, but it died in January, 1489.

Piero had returned directly after the wedding. Clarice's health did not improve and Lorenzo wrote that Piero should come and fetch her. He would prefer her to wait for Piero's bride, if possible, and he would like Maddalena to return with her, "for she is but a child, her husband's house is in confusion and she would be a comfort to Clarice". Maddalena was her mother's favourite, "the eye of her heart". He adds that he would be delighted if Franceschetto came for S. John's Day.

As often happens, Lorenzo was not too fond of his in-laws. "Strange and peculiar are the minds of these Orsini," he once wrote irritably to Lanfredini, from whom he had no secrets. "They are grasping and ambitious, and, unless kept steady from necessity, unstable." Yet he chose an Orsini for Piero, Alfon-sina, daughter of the late Grand Constable of Naples, a good soldier and a great favourite with Ferrante. Obviously he acted from political motives. He cancelled the large debt owed the bank by the family for the occasion. The wedding was to be performed by proxy, thus giving Piero an almost royal status. Lorenzo's brother-in-law, Rucellai, who acted as proxy, sent him the usual details about the bride's physique. The throat is too thick behind, but the arms, generally a safe guide to the legs, are good and she is well-grown for thirteen. The dowry was to be 12,000 ducats. The whole Neapolitan court was at the wedding, Ferrante laying aside his mourning for the occasion.

Politian, who went with Piero to Rome, wrote on the journey (May, 1488) that they were all in the highest spirits, picking up new tunes and songs as they went. Piero, like the rest of the family, sang well. On May 5th, after witnessing a good performance of the Menoechmi of Plautus, Lorenzo had gone off to the baths. They all returned together, except Franco :

for Cibo, having discovered his business capacities, had made over the income from the baths at Stigliano, near Bracciano, to Maddalena, and left Franco to manage them and get them ship-shape. This he appears to have done most successfully. His descriptions of his efforts to bring the place, which was so filthy that Bagni a Morba was a Careggi by comparison, into some kind of order, and his struggles with " bandits, soldiers and thieves ; with poisonous dogs, lepers, Jews, madmen, fools and Romans ", to say nothing of the insects, is highly amusing.

The elaborate festivities arranged for May 22nd in Florence had to be put off owing to the death of Lorenzo's youngest daughter, Lucia, as well as that of his favourite sister, Bianca dei Pazzi. The family went to Careggi. In June St John's Day was celebrated with all the glories of happier years for the first time since the Pazzi conspiracy, in honour of Franceschetto. " Cibo ■ Palle " was heard on all sides and there was a round of banquets. In due course Lorenzo invited his son-in-law to be his guest, treating him as a member of the family. Except on great occasions the Medici lived very simply. Fearing that the distinguished suite he had brought with him might be similarly treated, Cibo made enquiries, learning, to his relief and surprise, that they were being entertained in the most lavish style. When he expressed his astonishment to his father-in-law, he was told that he was being treated as his son, but his suite were being entertained in a style befitting foreigners of rank who had come to do honour to the wedding.

Clarice was dangerously ill, so ill that Lorenzo begged the Pope to allow Maddalena to stay with her. Innocent consented and sent Franceschetto off on a mission to Perugia. Lorenzo himself was far from well and his doctor, Pier Leone, ordered him to take the waters at Filetta in the Sienese. No one had thought that her end was so near when Clarice died nine days later in the arms of Maddalena. Her death

made little mark. On August 1st, when Clarice was given a suitable funeral, the ambassador wrote to Ferrara that he had not troubled to write the news for three days, as it did not seem of sufficient importance. The doctors and his friends had insisted on Lorenzo staying to finish his cure. The trouble with him was that he rarely remained long enough at the baths for the waters to be effective. He wrote feelingly after Clarice's death in a letter to the Pope and there is no doubt that, with his warm-hearted nature, he was affected by it, for he was attached to his wife whom he always treated with respect.

When Maddalena returned to Rome, Franco was her one comfort. She was neglected and in bad health. Early in 1492 Franco wrote that during the winter Cibo had played every night, supping at 7 or 8, and returning to bed at daybreak, though his wife could not and would not sleep or eat without him. She, poor patient child, so perfect and charming, pined away without air or exercise—how often must she have longed for the genial, healthy, open-air, family life of Careggi!—neglected by everyone, till she became as thin as a lizard. Franco, who was a combination of chaplain, secretary, nurse and uncle, cooked for her and did everything for her. He sends back the most intimate details about her health. She took every passing whim of her husband with the utmost seriousness and her condition went to Franco's heart. He ends by begging to be recalled to Florence, since he can do nothing either for her or for himself.

Piero was now coming more and more to the front. He went to Milan early in 1490 to represent the family at the wedding of the young Duke, Gian Galeazzo, to Isabella d'Aragona, daughter of Lorenzo's friend, Donna Ippolita, who had also died in 1488. Though not seventeen, Piero was treated as the guest of honour and placed between the Dukes of Milan and Bari at the first interview. Then the court was admitted and they talked horses—Piero managed his father's stud—

and of other amusing things, as well as politics. His dignity and the way in which he could talk on any subject awakened general admiration. The Florentine ambassador said that some thought the young Duke showed signs of not liking Isabella at their first meeting, a fact of considerable interest, for, when he did not consummate the marriage, we gather from a letter of Lorenzo that there was talk of his divorcing his bride and ceding her to his uncle Ludovico. Lorenzo thought Ferrante might be pleased at the change. This fact throws an even more sinister light on Ludovico's treatment of his nephew.²

CHAPTER XIII

GIOVANNI MADE CARDINAL. LORENZO AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS POWER

If Lorenzo worked hard to stir the paternal heart of Innocent to do what he regarded as his duty towards Franceschetto Cibo, his efforts on behalf of Giovanni were infinitely more persistent. Like Cosimo, Lorenzo had a correspondent in every place of importance to send him all the information he needed, apart from the official despatches. At this time the Rome embassy, if we may so put it, was the most important post in the Florentine diplomatic service and was always filled by one of Lorenzo's intimates. Towards the end of Lorenzo's life his secretary warns Pietro Alamanni, who was ambassador then, to write more fully to the Eight, as they were complaining that there was so little in his despatches ; but he need not let them into any secrets. The Florentine despatches to Alamanni are in Lorenzo's own hand, sometimes in cipher, even when they are copies of documents. Once Lorenzo actually imitates Ferrante's signature. This gives us some idea of how hard he worked, in spite of his multifarious interests. No wonder we find him complaining that he is tired, as he has been writing all day.

Giovanni Lanfredini, who now held the post, was the ablest of these ambassadors and exercised great influence at the Vatican. Lorenzo wrote to the Pope that "he possesses my heart and I am sincerely attached to him on account of his merits". It was thanks not a little to his tireless efforts that Giovanni ultimately received a red hat. From his birth on December 12th, 1475, Lorenzo had destined his second son for an ecclesiastical career. Giovanni was

a placid, healthy child. When in Naples Lorenzo was told that he liked going to bed early and boasted that he did not wake up all night.

From the first Lorenzo was quite shameless in hunting for rich benefices, as was then the fashion, for the son whom he "had given to God". On May 19th, 1483, he notes, "news came that the King of France had, of his own accord, conferred the Abbey of Font Dolce upon our Giovanni. On the 31st came news from Rome that the Pope had confirmed the appointment and enabled him to hold benefices at the age of seven, making him a Protonotary. On June 1st our Giovanni came to Florence from Poggio with me, being confirmed and tonsured by our Monsignore d'Arezzo, and was called Messer Giovanni. The ceremonies took place in our own chapel and in the evening we returned to Poggio a Caiano. On the 8th June the courier Jacquino came with letters from the King which conferred on our Messer Giovanni the archbishopric of Aix. . . . May God dispose all for the best. On the same day all the children, except M. Giovanni, were confirmed in the chapel." The Pope objected to the appointment on account of the boy's age and then it was found that the archbishop had not yet died. On March 1st, 1484, died the Abbot of Pasignano and an express was sent to Rome asking for the abbey for Giovanni. On the 2nd, in accordance with an order of the Signoria, possession was taken of it, as Sixtus had conferred it on the boy and Innocent had confirmed the appointment when Piero was in Rome. The monks strongly resented their great abbey, which was not only one of the richest in Tuscany, but also a strong fortress, being thus put "in commendam". Their attitude was so threatening that the Bargello had to intervene with the police and use force before he could gain admittance. And so it went on.

Lorenzo's business agents in France kept him informed, as was then usual, of all the rich benefices

vacant, but he was not very successful there ; the plums naturally went to Frenchmen. In Italy, and notably in Tuscany, many rich cures were given the boy. Lorenzo snapped up even small abbeys and bishoprics. All these he administrated as if they were his own, as was then quite common, annexing the revenues, which were very useful in those times of stress, and alienating the lands, with the consent of the monks, in order to round off his estates.

His object was as much political as personal. He endeavoured to prevent Tuscan church property going to foreigners ; and the Florentines were therefore not unwilling to see it fall into Medici hands. Giovanni duly received the family canonry in the cathedral, which he shortly afterwards ceded to Ficino. Later it went to Matteo Franco, the only reward he received for his devotion from the younger Medici. The greatest prize that fell to Giovanni was, however, the famous Benedictine abbey of Montecassino, given him by Ferrante in 1486, partly to gratify Lorenzo, but even more in order to keep it out of the hands of his enemy the Pope, since it was very strong. Innocent hesitated, but ended by yielding, for he did not wish to offend Lorenzo just when his son was about to marry Maddalena. Not to be outdone, Ludovico Sforza gave the boy the rich Lombard abbey of Morimondo. Both donors deprecated thanks, Ludovico saying that their relations were such that it was their duty to do all they could for each other : Ferrante that, whatever he did, he could not repay a thousandth part of what he owed the Medici. Nor did Lorenzo forget to provide for his nephew, Giulio, for whom he procured the rich abbey of Capua. He had not yet taken orders, though he was made a Knight of Rhodes.

But there was still the red hat. Florence had not had one since the days of Pius II. The Pope was leaning more and more on Lorenzo, both politically and morally. Unfortunately, he had declared that

there should be no cardinal under thirty. However, by 1488 Lanfredini wrote reassuringly. He was surprised at the determination the Pope showed to give the hat to Giovanni. Innocent doubtless felt that he could count on the boy's support and, by not publishing the nomination, he would have a hold on Lorenzo. Cardinals Borgia and Ascanio Sforza did yeoman service, the latter especially, out of gratitude for Lorenzo's help in reconciling him to his brother. Then in 1489 the Pope created five cardinals, as well as three others not named, among these being the fourteen-year-old Giovanni, the youngest cardinal ever nominated. When objections had been made to his youth, Lanfredini pointed out that the cardinalate was an office, not a cure of souls ; but he was quite ready to swear that the boy was fifteen and asked Lorenzo whether he could not find credible witnesses to swear it too. Shortly after the nomination a mysterious 95,000 gold florins appears in the Papal accounts as owed to the Medici, for which a tiara was pledged. The hat is said to have cost the Florentine Treasury 50,000 ducats. Lorenzo was also Treasurer to the Sacred College and lent money freely to the cardinals, most of whom were his friends.

The nomination was not to be published for three years, except in the case of the Pope's death, but it was, of course, known at once, the cardinals being the first to spread the news, in spite of their oath. Lorenzo found it impossible to check the festivities with which the event was celebrated by the delighted Florentines, who were overjoyed at the honour conferred upon their city. No one believed his statement that it was not settled. He told the Pope in the style of the day that Giovanni should be absolutely his and that everything he possessed should be at the disposal of His Holiness, adding that the event would greatly increase his prestige. This was true. This proof of Lorenzo's influence in Rome made a profound impression, Alfonso of Calabria remarking that the

Florentine ambassador ruled the Pope ; one saw what the Pope would do for Lorenzo, if he made his son a cardinal at an unheard-of age ; if only they could get together, his influence with Innocent would effect a settlement. Some remarks of the Pope, characteristic of a weak man, showed his annoyance at the interpretation put upon the step.

The youthful Cardinal Deacon of S. Maria in Domnica was in due course packed off to Pisa, where he occupied the small but beautiful Medici palace, to make himself a good and learned ecclesiastic, as the Pope bade him, at his father's pet university by studying canon law. Lorenzo had refounded the university there. He was often in Pisa and had noticed that it was quiet, as it had never recovered since its capture by Florence, and that there were a number of empty houses which would provide cheap lodgings for the students. Except for literature and philosophy all the faculties were transferred thither from Florence and the Pope allowed a special tax on the clergy for the benefit of the university. But the climate and the difficulty of raising funds interfered with the project. Florence was the capital and, with professors such as Chalcondylas, Lascaris, Ficino and Politian, continued to be the centre of the humanistic and real intellectual movement. However, Decio and Sozzini were famous teachers of canon law. Like Giovanni, Cesare Borgia sat at their feet, taking a brilliant degree at Pisa in 1491. Lanfredini wisely urged Lorenzo to see that the young cardinal always spoke Latin.

All this expenditure increased the difficulties of Lorenzo's financial position, which had been going from bad to worse since the troubles of 1478. He is usually blamed for neglecting his business and Valori says that he detested it. Recent writers, however, are more doubtful about this negligence. It is true that he had not Cosimo's financial genius to give the Medici a unique position in the world of finance, nor

had he had his father's business training, but he was in continual and close correspondence with his agents, especially in France, where was the centre of the Medici foreign trade, with none more than with Sassetti at Lyons. On a single day in 1488 he wrote seventeen letters to leading men in France, beginning with the king, about the affairs of the Lyons bank. The Bruges agency, however, he certainly did neglect. After 1470 correspondence with it almost ceased and in 1480 he sold it to the Portinari to gratify Louis XI, as it had been very useful to Burgundy. It was through the Portinari that the Medici acquired, with other Flemish pictures, the great Adoration of the Child by Van der Goes which seems so out of place in the Uffizzi.

The trouble was that times were changing. France and England were progressing financially and were beginning to be more independent. Other nations were also learning to make good cloth, with the result that the profits of the Italian traders and bankers shrank. The death of the Duchess Mary of Burgundy, leaving a quantity of unpaid debts, in 1482, was a severe blow to the Italian bankers, who had advanced the money. Though Lorenzo was not personally concerned, the disaster reacted on the credit of the Italian community as a whole. In 1487 the Portinari failed, involving him in a loss of 100,000 ducats. Guicciardini says that the style in which these foreign agents lived had not a little to do with these failures. Instead of cutting down expenditure as their revenues shrank, they increased it. Also, Lorenzo was not strict enough in checking their accounts. The Lyons branch—Lyons was an important centre not only of Italian trade, but of Italian culture in France—was soon in difficulties, too, Philippe de Commines being a heavy loser. In 1486 Lorenzo wrote to him himself, admitting that for some time the branch had sustained such losses that it was impossible to conceal them. He goes on to acknowledge the great debt in which

he stands to Commines and duly places all he possesses at his feet. Unfortunately this was not sufficient to meet the debt in full, for the Sieur d'Argentun complained that he received "appointment bien mègre". However, three years later the Lyons and Rome branches were doing better. In 1491 Spinelli, who succeeded Sassetti, writes that he thinks the Sieur d'Argentun will remain their friend. "In order not to anger him, I have always told him that, if God grants us grace to prosper and make up more of the losses we suffered in Leonetti's time, you will give him his share. I think that this prospect will induce him to support us, if he believes me." The letter has a curiously modern ring. Leonetti dei Rossi had married Piero's natural daughter and was the father of Cardinal dei Rossi.

Lorenzo's personal expenditure was heavy. Rinuccini, who did not love the "tyrant", says that he was lavish only with public money, mean with his own; others, however, like Politian, speak highly of his munificence. At the time of his death he owed Verrocchio's heirs a considerable sum, part of it for work done a quarter of a century previously. It was Verrocchio who did the charming putto carrying a dolphin now in the courtyard of the Palazzo della Signoria, which was originally designed for Careggi. He was the foremost master of the day. Leonardo da Vinci, Lorenzo di Credi and Botticelli all worked in his studio. Like Cosimo, Lorenzo shared his banking account with the Treasury, but it was now the Treasury that was the loser. The difficulty experienced in meeting the interest on the Monte was commonly laid to his charge. The new constitution added greatly to his authority and increased his control over the Treasury. Cambi accuses him of employing unscrupulous agents to help him manipulate the Monte still more in his favour and he certainly manipulated the *scala*, the graduated income tax, in accordance with family tradition, to his own advantage.

Much of Lorenzo's detestation of business may well be due to his losses. They explain why he turned to farming in the hope of recouping himself.

Lorenzo was now at the height of his power and he began to show more openly that he meant to use it. He had long kept a jealous eye on the relations of the more important families, being careful that they should not enter into close alliances by marriage or in other ways that might prove dangerous to the Medici. In 1489, when it had been found impossible to get a quorum for electing the magistrates on the day appointed because most of the committee were in the country hunting, those who refused to return when summoned were disqualified from office for three years by the Gonfalonier. Lorenzo, who was at Pisa, resented this independence, especially as his confidential secretary, Ser Piero Dovizi da Bibbiena, was not admitted while the Council was deliberating ; so, as soon as he was out of office, the Gonfalonier was in his turn *ammonito*. Again the Ferrarese ambassador describes how a riot began in the Piazza, where the people were trying to rescue a young man who had murdered an officer of the Eight and fled to Siena, but had been extradited. The Otto di Balia appeared upon the scene and ordered the Piazza to be cleared under threat of the death penalty. The ambassadors of Milan and Genoa, as well as two of Lorenzo's cousins, interceded for the young man. Lorenzo, who was in the Palace at the time, answered politely, but had him hung from a window, then ordered four of the ringleaders to be seized and given four jerks with the cord and banished for four years ; nor would he move from the Square till all was quiet. Most people will feel that Lorenzo deserves nothing but praise for his firmness in maintaining order.

Not that he had changed in manner or appearance. The title of *Il Magnifico*, by which he is usually known, was bestowed on any citizen of wealth and position. He was as deferential as ever to his elders,

treating the magistrates with all respect, polite to everyone and careful never to behave otherwise than as a simple citizen. He continued to wear the *lucco*, the red cloak of the Florentines. But it was rumoured that, when he reached the age of forty-five, he would have himself proclaimed Gonfalonier for life. In 1490 another step was taken towards increasing his authority by weakening that of the Seventy, whose power was too permanent. A Balia of seventeen was created, of which he was a member, and to it was entrusted the task of choosing the Signoria in the old way by means of *accoppiatori*. The calling in of a quantity of debased foreign money and an order that the taxes were to be paid in the new coins issued, caused much discontent; nor was any attempt made to remedy the irregularities in the management of the Monte and the Monte delle Doti, the interest on which was again reduced.

In Italy Lorenzo enjoyed unrivalled prestige. He was universally looked up to as the tongue of the political balance of the peninsula and it was known that he used his influence unremittingly for peace. The keynote of his policy was his friendship with the Pope and he worked hard to prevent him from venting his anger against Ferrante of Naples in anything more formidable than words and, above all, from calling in French aid. His letters to Lanfredini, his ambassador in Rome, are among his best and show the shrewdness with which he judged the political situation. The Venetians, he was told, hated him as the Devil hates the cross. In the end he was successful and Ferrante was duly grateful.

In other ways, too, he was quite unchanged. He was still the affectionate father. He begins a letter to his little girl, "My dear little Contessina, I am writing to tell you that, thank God, I am very well and have been getting better ever since I left. These regular baths are doing me a lot of good. . . . Be very nice to Alfonsina and keep her company; tell

her from me to take great care of the baby. I hear that Monsignore [Giovanni] and the other children have gone away. It is naughty of them to leave you alone, but I shall be back soon and stay with you and they can stay at the villa as long as they like. Spedalotto, July 31st, 1489."

In this very year he wrote *La Rappresentazione di SS. Giovanni e Paolo*, a play such as was then acted by the religious guilds, for the Compagnia del Vangelista. In this his son Giuliano played a part and Maestro Isaak supplied the music. It is among the least important of his poems, but the remarks of Constantine upon the burdens and duties of kingship are interesting, reflecting as they probably do Lorenzo's own feelings. The ideals are high. He seems to be attracted by Julian the Apostate, who is the most vigorously drawn of the characters. Nor had he lost his interest in popular poetry. Michelangelo used to tell of a wool-carder who was a great favourite with him on account of his gift for improvising : he was even said to have seen Lorenzo's ghost. Lorenzo's correspondence is very varied. He could actually find time to send a Venetian ambassador in Rome a collection of the songs, both grave and gay, of Heinrich Isaak.

Lorenzo was still an ardent patron of the turf. He writes to his trainer at Siena, where he had entered Dormi for the palio, that he was right to have the horse doctored for the swelling in the knee at once. If he is not fit, he is not to run. It is too late to send another horse (July, 1490).

Apparently, too, he was still an ardent lover. His last passion, which endured for several years, was for Bartolomea de' Nasi, wife of Donato Benci, who, though neither beautiful nor young, was charming and lively. One winter, when she was in the country, he rode out to see her with several friends every evening, but was back in Florence by daybreak. When she discovered that two of his companions deeply deplored such conduct, which cannot have been

good for his health, he sent them, to gratify her resentment, as ambassadors to the Sultan and the Grand Turk. The cold, level-headed Guicciardini considers it little less than madness for a man of forty, enjoying such well-deserved prestige, to be smitten with an elderly woman, who was not even handsome, in a way that would disgrace a boy.

He was always ready to help his friends. Ermolao Barbaro, a distinguished Venetian scholar, ambassador and Procurator of St Mark, is a case in point. Piero was taking his father's place more and more during his absence. Ermolao appeared unexpectedly in the spring of 1491, while Lorenzo was at the baths, and had to go to an inn, as his rooms were not ready ; for this he received compensation from the Signoria. He was at once invited to the Via Larga, where the men he most wished to see, Pico, Ficino and Politian, were asked to meet him, "and, in order to have a citizen, without going outside the family and the scholars, we chose Bernardo Rucellai", writes Piero. "I don't know whether we did right. After dinner we showed him the house, the medals, the vases and cameos, everything, even the garden of S. Marco." The Medici displayed their treasures gladly to those who could appreciate them. Lorenzo would arrange his choicest possessions on the table for an understanding guest. "He was very pleased, though I don't think he knows much about sculpture. He was especially interested in the medals. . . . I cannot tell you much about him, except that he is very choice in his speech and takes pride in referring to the classics, quoting from them in the original. He is obliged to be temperate in all things, for he seems very delicate." Lorenzo came to Ermolao's help when he was banished from Venice for accepting the Patriarchate of Aquileia without asking the permission of his government : he tried to induce the Pope to give him a red hat. Politian visited Ermolao's father in Venice, when he told him with tears that Lorenzo was their only hope.

CHAPTER XIV

PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA AND SAVONAROLA

Of all the Medici circle the one who made the most impression in his day and whose reputation it is most difficult for us to understand now was Pico della Mirandola, "the Phoenix of the wits", as Politian christened him. His first appearance upon the Florentine scene is in a talk with Ficino in 1484 on the day when he finished the task laid on him by Cosimo of translating Plato into Latin. The two men discussed philosophical questions and Ficino assures us in his dedication to Lorenzo that in the course of this talk he determined to devote the rest of his life to a version of Plotinus.

Though little more than twenty—he was born in 1463—Giovanni Pico della Mirandola was already a man of mark. He was the younger son of the lord of Mirandola and the story goes that, while his mother was in travail with him, a fiery circle appeared in her room, and then vanished—a sign that the child would be as perfect as a circle. Possessed of an iron memory, he learned with astonishing ease. At fourteen—by no means an early age then—he went to the University of Bologna to study canon law, but tired of it in two years. Leaving the beaten track, he gave himself up to "speculation and philosophy, as well human as devyne", to quote the version of his nephew's life by Sir Thomas More. In his thirst for knowledge he visited the universities of France as well as those of Italy. He threw himself into these studies with extraordinary ardour, even for that day, and when he reached Florence, he was considered a paragon of learning. He was said to know twenty-two languages, an absurd exaggeration. However,

he was certainly the first scholar of note to turn to the Eastern languages and to Hebrew literature in seeking to solve the problem that then faced thoughtful men. He tried to prove that not only Plato, but the Cabbala confirmed Christianity, and he set about the task in the fantastic manner of the Quattrocento. Not that he was much of an Oriental scholar, for a Jew was able to palm off a number of volumes of the Cabbala upon him for a large sum as priceless manuscripts written by Ezra.

Humanists there were in plenty, but there was something about the personality of this wealthy, high-born, comely young scholar that made an irresistible appeal to the men of the Renaissance with their admiration for the complete and perfect man of all-round accomplishments, especially if he were handsome. "The spirit of God and the spirit of the age cannot produce more than one man of his worth in a century," said the Jewish friend who was his teacher in Hebrew. Says his biographer, "of feature and shape seemly and beauteous, of stature goodly and high, of flesh tender and soft, his visage lovely and fair, his colour white, intermingled with comely reds, his eyes grey and quick of look, his teeth white and even, his hair yellow" and flowing abundantly over his shoulders; according to Politian "Nature seemed to have showered on this man, or rather this hero, every gift of mind and body." No woman seems to have touched his heart, though his beauty, his fame and his birth "set many women a fyre on him, from ye desyre of whome he not abhorrynge was somewhat fallen in wantonnesse". There was something almost feminine about his charm. He was the perfect companion, at least for a man. "Bone Deus! What a man! A talk with him drives away all care," exclaims the anxious Politian, while Lorenzo told Franco that a walk with him was the greatest pleasure that could fall to a citizen of Florence. A man of such glamour added lustre to the Medici circle.

Florence soon became his real home. Nowhere else in Italy would he have been so much at his ease.

In 1486 his troubles began. For two years, wrote the Ferrarese ambassador, Count Giovanni della Mirandola had been living in such splendour and amid such universal esteem as few men had enjoyed in Florence; then, one day, giving out that he was going to Rome, he sent his luggage forward, but stayed at Arezzo, where dwelt a lady with whom he had a love affair—the beautiful wife of one Giuliano dei Medici, who was employed in the administration of taxes. The said lady, by previous arrangement, left her husband's house. She pretended to be going for a walk, but just outside the town she got up behind the count, who had an armed suite of some twenty men. The alarm-bell was rung and the pursuit was so hot that Pico had to abandon the lady after a fight in which every one of his men who could be reached was killed and spoiled, while many of the citizens also lost their lives. He escaped, thanks to his horse, but was arrested. It was thought that the fact of the lady's husband being a Medici might cause serious trouble, but Pico was at once set free and the husband took back his wife, a rich young widow whom he had only just married; she pleaded that she had been kidnapped. Pico said that he was sorry for his sin, adding that he thought he deserved forgiveness because he did not attempt to defend himself. "Nothing is weaker than man, nothing is mightier than love." The ambassador adds that Pico was reputed a saint and prophesied, quite wrongly, that he would lose reputation and status by the escapade.

Pico's next adventure made far more stir and had far more serious consequences. After seven years devoted to study, "full of pride and desirous of glory and man's praise (for yet he was not kindled in the love of God)" he went to Rome and there propounded 900 questions, in which he covered the whole field

of the knowledge of his day. These, as a champion of the faith, he undertook to defend against all comers, offering to pay the expenses of those who came to Rome to contend with him. Such pretensions naturally awakened opposition and thirteen of the questions were soon denounced, not unfairly, as savouring of heresy. "No exercise of ingenuity would ever succeed in harmonizing his theology with the Catholic or any form of the Christian faith, and it is equally impossible to dispute the sincerity of his piety." His nature "was compounded of mysticism and rationalism, credulity and scepticism in almost equal proportions".

Pico hastily put together a clever apology and dedicated it to Lorenzo in a rather exaggerated strain, which was not peculiar to himself. He had once assured Lorenzo that his poems were superior to those of Petrarch and Dante: possibly he thought it prudent to flatter his vanity. The move was a wise one, considering Lorenzo's influence with the Pope. God is his witness that he does not think it worthy of such a man, though he has long realized that he owes him everything. His words are too cold to express the love and veneration he has long felt for him. Pico was in France when the Pope condemned the thesis in no measured terms. His friends worked hard on his behalf, notably Lorenzo. On his return Pico settled permanently in Florence, living generally in villas outside the city. Thanks to Lorenzo he was now given the citizenship.

He refused to recant, denying that there was anything heretical in his questions. In June, 1489, Lorenzo wrote to Lanfredini that he was leading an almost monastic existence, working incessantly on theological subjects. "He recites the office, observes the fasts and is strictly continent; he lives quite modestly, without many servants, only such as are strictly necessary. To me he seems an example for all men. But he desires to be absolved from the

charge of contumacy towards His Holiness and to be accepted as a son and a good Christian, continuing in the life of a Christian. . . . Do all you can to obtain this brief in full, so that his conscience may be set at rest. I shall value this as highly as any of the great favours you have obtained for me." In October Lanfredini announced that it was only out of respect for Lorenzo that the Pope was so lenient with the sinner. Lorenzo replied that he was much displeased and that the Pope's attitude was due only to the machinations of Pico's enemies, who took refuge behind the Pope, so that he could not reply to them. Pico is a man who can be an instrument either for good or for evil. Driven to despair, he might really take a step against the Pope.

Meanwhile Pico published his *Hectaplus*, a commentary on Genesis, which he dedicated to Lorenzo in honour of Giovanni's red hat—rather a strange tribute in the circumstances. It attracted considerable attention, but only increased the doubts of his orthodoxy. It was not till 1493 that a brief of the new Pope, Alexander VI, acquitted him on all points.

Thenceforth the Count lived quietly at Querceto, near Florence, a changed man. He distributed large sums among the poor and burnt his poems. Politian, after his wont, praised them excessively, but in all probability they are no great loss. To judge by the few specimens that have survived, they were, like his letters, infinitely inferior to those of Politian.

This change in Pico's life was due partly to disappointment at the result of the challenge of the 900 questions, but hardly less to the influence of Fra Girolamo Savonarola. The two men had met at a chapter of the Dominicans held at Reggio Emilia, to which Savonarola had been sent by his convent, S. Marco in Florence. To it had been invited a number of ecclesiastics and a few noted lay scholars, among them Pico. The fire with which the young monk of Ferrara denounced the immorality and

corruption of the Church made a great impression, on none more than on Pico. He saw at once that this was a personality of note, endowed with the passion and the force of character in which himself was lacking. The great preacher spoke from the heart to the heart and not to the head, rejecting with scorn the learning of the humanists. In the houses of powerful prelates nothing is thought of but poetry and the art of oratory, he says in one of his sermons, "Go and see them: you will find them with the classics in their hands, learning to direct souls from Virgil, Horace and Cicero." The impression he made was indelible and it was Pico who, in the midst of the spiritual troubles caused by the Papal condemnation of his work, begged Lorenzo to order the monks of S. Marco to send for Savonarola; he is even said to have dictated the letter which Lorenzo wrote to the Dominicans of S. Marco. Thus it was from the very heart of the Medici circle and from the monastery that owed so much to Cosimo that the man was to appear who did more than anyone else to undermine their rule and to blacken their reputation with posterity.

Savonarola first came to Florence in 1482—much about the same time as Pico—driven from Ferrara by the war. Successful though he had been in teaching the novices, he had failed as a preacher. His manner was not one to which his audience was accustomed and he afterwards admitted that he had not had enough experience. But a course of Lenten sermons at San Gimignano, marked by the passionate earnestness which was to become so familiar, had quite carried away the congregation, with the result that many of them had completely changed their way of life. Other courses delivered in North Italy had greatly increased the friar's reputation. Thus when he returned to Florence he was a man of mark. He was given his old work of teaching the novices, but the number of those anxious to hear his exposition

of Revelation soon outgrew the room and he lectured under a rose tree in the garden. When he was set to preach in the Church, the effect of his sermons was instantaneous. Everybody talked of him and everybody wanted to hear him. In 1491 he was asked to preach in the Cathedral for Lent. The fervour of his denunciations of woes to come, poured out in sudden bursts of eloquence, as ~~as~~ his appeals to repentance, made an extraordinary impression. There was nothing new in the matter of these sermons, delivered in the rough, passionate language of this mystic visionary with a genius for preaching. Certainly he had nothing for the humanists, accustomed to admire elegant discourses filled with quotations from the classics, such as Politian could compose as well as anybody, except to show them the vanity of their learning and teach them, as he taught Pico, to "set more by devotion than connynge". He appealed to the deeply religious, almost fanatical strain that lurked in many of these Florentines, the obverse of their mocking scepticism, the strain that is so marked in the diary of Ser Lapo Mazzei. He sought to turn them back from the Renaissance to the Middle Ages.

Finally, Savonarola was actually invited to preach before the Signoria. He used the opportunity to declare that all the good and all the evil in the city depended on its head; if he trod the path of righteousness, it would become completely holy. Then he went on to denounce Lorenzo's tyranny, accusing him of not listening to the cause of the poor, making his peasants work for nothing or of letting his friends do so. Already he was becoming the "apostle of a morality with no foundation in life". He had forgotten, like preachers of the millennium in all ages, that Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

Lorenzo was annoyed. A good Lenten preacher was regarded as an entertainment, a kind of savoury after the sweets of carnival. Naturally he was still more annoyed when, on being elected Prior of

S. Marco, Savonarola declined to visit him. "A stranger has come into my house and refuses to visit me," he exclaimed. However, he tried to conciliate him. He was in the habit of visiting the monastery occasionally, but when he was strolling in the garden, the Prior, rather churlishly, refused to come out and talk to him. Then he sent rich gifts, but Savonarola said in a sermon that, when a good dog is defending his master, he will go on barking even when he is thrown a bone. Finally a group of influential citizens visited him and suggested that he should change his tone; but he answered that Lorenzo should repent of his sins. Threats of expulsion left him unmoved. It was on this occasion that he prophesied in the presence of credible witnesses that Lorenzo, Ferrante of Naples, and the Pope would all die soon.

Though he was not nearly so intimate with the monks, he was, in fact, far less religious than Cosimo, Lorenzo was careful to keep on good terms with the clergy, for he well knew the value of their support. He was also a benefactor of several of the monasteries, such as the Angeli. There was often bitter enmity between the different religious orders and Lorenzo decided to set up a rival to Savonarola. This was Fra Mariano da Genazzano, an Austin friar and a great favourite with Lorenzo, who had actually had built for him the monastery of S. Gallo by the Porta S. Gallo, from which Giuliano Giamberti, its architect, obtained his name of S. Gallo. Lorenzo had provided it with a good library and he often went there to talk philosophy with Fra Mariano. Politian, who knew the friar well, said that he had never met anyone more charming or more tactful. He neither repelled by undue sternness, nor deceived by excessive indulgence. Preachers as a rule look glum and bore people by continually preaching morality, but the friar was a moderate man. In the pulpit a stern censor, he was a delightful companion in private life. In fact, he was

the fashionable preacher of all time and in Renaissance Florence he was, of course, a humanist who delivered highly polished, scholarly sermons. So much was he regarded as Lorenzo's private property that other rulers who wanted him wrote to ask Lorenzo to let them have him, for he was one of the most popular preachers in Italy. Thus Fra Mariano was invited to preach. Lorenzo and many of his friends were there, but the friar broke into such shameful abuse of Savonarola that he disgusted former admirers like Pico and Politian and drove them back to S. Marco. The attempt to set up a rival failed. Thenceforth Savonarola, being left to preach in peace, avoided attacks on the Medici.

CHAPTER XV

LORENZO'S DEATH (1492)

LORENZO's dearest wish was to see Giovanni not merely made cardinal, but proclaimed. His relations with Innocent became more and more close. He continued to bank for him and lend him money. Like other rulers of the time, he sent him presents, such as game or Trebbiano wine (Trebbio, in the Mugello, was one of the Medici Villas), in order, he said, to keep His Holiness cheerful and in good spirits, for cheerfulness was then considered a valuable preventive of illness. Thus after the peace Ferrante had sent Innocent a couple of dozen barrels of the best Neapolitan wine. The Pope promised to see that the Cardinal S. Maria in Domnica was as well off in ecclesiastical possessions as the Medici could wish, but he would not hear of proclaiming him : he was far too young. It was a relief to find that, when the Pope had a serious illness and the cardinals were sounded, they virtually all promised to secure Giovanni's recognition. Later, the question also became political. By suspending the proclamation of the youthful Milanese Cardinal Sanseverino and allowing that of Giovanni the Pope made it clear that his sympathies lay with Naples and Florence against Milan and the King of France.

As the matter was already virtually settled, Lorenzo did not avail himself of the proffered privilege. Perhaps he had no wish to help in flouting Ludovico Sforza. He waited till the full three years had passed and then made the ceremony as simple as possible. It took place at the abbey of S. Bartolomeo, which Cosimo had founded at Fiesole. None of the family

was present, only Pico and Jacopo Salviati as witnesses. The Mass of the Holy Spirit was sung, Giovanni communicated with great devoutness—he had been commended for his frequent confessions during the period of waiting—the robes were blessed and placed upon the altar, with the ring and the hat which had been blessed by the Pope, and the priest declared the three years stipulated in the bull at an end. Thus the youngest cardinal ever created was proclaimed away from Rome and not by the Pope. After the mid-day meal Piero arrived on a splendid horse adorned with gold trappings with a number of friends and relations. A large crowd had gathered in the drenching rain. The cardinal, riding a mule, made his entry by the Porta S. Gallo, where the clergy and all the officials, ambassadors and people of importance were waiting to escort him. He visited the Annunziata and the cathedral and thence went to pay an official visit to the Signoria, after which he was escorted to the Via Larga by the ambassadors. He was only a guest now, for a cardinal was obliged to have a residence of his own. The whole city was decorated and illuminated and the rejoicing was general and genuine.

Next day came the ecclesiastical ceremonies in the cathedral, followed by a magnificent banquet. Lorenzo appeared during the evening to see the guests. He was slightly better and was beginning to ride again, in spite of the pain, but he was seriously ill. This was the crowning triumph of his life and the last ceremony in which he was to take part. Confetti were flung to the crowd and Giovanni threw his red hat to be scrambled for by some of his friends, to each of whom he gave a gold ring. A service of silver plate was presented by the Signoria, "che fu stupenda cosa da vedere", valued at 10,000 ducats. He also received four bowls full of medals from the family collection. Many other gifts were offered, but these were all that he would accept. On March 11th, the evening before he left, two *Trionfi* appeared

before his house, an elephant—was it prophetic of the one he was to receive as Pope, the famous Ammone?—with a garland of fireworks and the seven cardinal virtues. After appropriate songs had been sung they were burnt with their fireworks.

On March 12th Giovanni left Florence and to him his father wrote his well-known letter of advice. Probably he would have written in any case, but Picotti shows that some of the advice was the result of a letter from Franceschetto, written to his father-in-law "out of the affection and the close relationship existing between us". He asks Lorenzo to warn Giovanni of the factions existing among the cardinals, all of which will try to win him; he will have many battles. He must trust no one, for even his servants will be bribed by "these satraps of ours". He must not be led by others, but lead himself. Clearly, in his own interest, he wanted Giovanni to act independently. This is how his father wrote:

"Messer Giovanni, You and we all owe the greatest debt to the Lord God on your account, because, in addition to the many benefits and honours our House has received from Him, He has granted to it in your person the highest dignity that has ever fallen to it. Great as it is, the circumstances make it even greater, your age and our position. In the first place, I earnestly beseech you to be grateful to the Lord God, remembering every hour that not your merits, wisdom or efforts have made you a cardinal, but God himself miraculously." Giovanni is to show his gratitude by leading a holy, exemplary and upright life. His father had been much gratified at hearing that he had confessed and communicated several times during the previous year of his own accord. "There is no better way of keeping the grace of God than to form such habits and persevere in them. This seems to me to be the most useful and salutary first piece of advice I can give you. I know that, in going to Rome, which is a sink of all evil, you will find greater

difficulty in so doing. . . . Not only will the example of others affect you, but there will be no lack of people to tempt you and corrupt you", especially among the many who are jealous of him and who think that, thanks to his youth, he will fall an easy victim. " You must make their task more difficult, as there is so little virtue in the Sacred College." Lorenzo remembers to have seen in the College a number of learned and good men of holy life : theirs are the examples Giovanni should follow ; " the less your way of life resembles that of the others, the better will you be known and esteemed. You must avoid, as you would Scilla and Charybdis, a name for hypocrisy and an evil reputation. Do not be ostentatious and be careful to avoid anything that may give offence in conduct or conversation without affecting austerity or severity. These are matters which in time you will understand and practise, I imagine, better than I can preach. You know how important his position makes the example of a cardinal and that all the world would be well, if the cardinals were what they ought to be ; for then there would always be a good Pope, from whom may be said to radiate peace to all Christians. Therefore strive to be like this, for, if others had done so, we might hope for this universal blessing. Nothing is more difficult than to get on well with different kinds of men and in this I cannot advise you, beyond saying that you should be charitable and respectful in your talk when in the company of cardinals and other men of position, weighing your reasons well without being influenced by the feelings of others, for many, desiring what they should not, pervert their reason. Set your conscience at rest by seeing that your conversation with everyone is devoid of offence. This, I think, should be your rule, for, if passion gives offence, a man will make up a quarrel the more easily, if there is no real cause for it.

" On this your first visit to Rome I think you had better make more use of your ears than your tongue.

To-day I have given you entirely to the Lord God and to Holy Church ; therefore you must become a good priest and make it clear to everyone that you love the honour and state of Holy Church and the Apostolic See more than all else in this world. With this reserve, you should not lack opportunities for helping the city and our House ; for it is for the good of the city to be united with the Church and in this you ought to be a valuable link and our House goes with the city. It is impossible to foresee the future, but, on the whole, I believe there will be plenty of ways, to quote the proverb, of saving the goat with the cabbages, but you must hold firmly to my first point of putting the Church before all else.

" You are the youngest cardinal not merely in the College, but that has ever been made, so when you have to do anything with the others, you must be respectful and humble and not keep people waiting in Chapel or in Consistory or at a deputation. You will soon find out the reputations of the others ; you must avoid the company of the more shady, not merely on your own account, but for the sake of public opinion. Converse in a general way with all. On solemn occasions I would rather you erred on the side of moderation ; I would rather see a well-appointed stable and a clean and well-ordered household than pomp and display. Try to live regularly, gradually reducing your establishment to order, for at present, while master and servants are still strangers to each other, this is not possible. Jewels and silk should be used sparingly in your position. You should rather have a few good antiques and handsome books and prefer a few well-mannered and learned attendants to a large household. Invite people more than you accept invitations to banquets, but do so sparingly. Eat simple food yourself and take plenty of exercise, for in your position, if a man is not careful, he easily loses his health. The rank of a cardinal is as secure as it is high ; hence men often become careless,

thinking that they have done enough and that they can keep their position without trouble. This often harms both their position and their life and you must be on your guard. You should be inclined to trust too little rather than too much.

"I advise you above all to rise early. Besides being good for the health, this habit will enable you to think over and arrange all the business for the day. In your position, as you have to read the office, study, give audiences, etc., you will find it very useful. Another thing is very necessary for a man like you, always to think over, especially in these early days, the evening before, what you have to do the next day, so that nothing may find you unprepared." As for speaking in Consistory, he had better be guided by the Pope. He will certainly be asked to intercede with the Holy Father for favours. "Be careful at first to ask as little as possible and not to trouble the Pope, for he is naturally inclined to prefer the man who dins his ears least. You must be careful not to bore him, but to talk to him about pleasant things ; if you have to ask a favour, do so humbly and modestly. This will please him and be more in accordance with his character. Keep well."

Much of the advice tallies exactly with the precepts of the *Cortegiano*. The letter is obviously sincere. No other prince of the Renaissance would have troubled to write to his son in such a strain : it shows how far Lorenzo stood above the average of his day not only in ability, but also in his sense of responsibility as a father. Doubtless he really thought that he was giving his son to God and that Giovanni owed his red hat to Providence, though the Pope had been cajoled and bribed into giving it him at an age which made the office ridiculous. Sincere he also is in urging him to lead a regular life, though probably he did so to some extent because he knew that an exemplary life paid best and was most likely to increase Giovanni's influence and help his career. Virtue

pays in the long run in a cardinal, like early rising or a well-ordered household. But at least there was enough good in Lorenzo to see this and express his advice worthily, though his remonstrances with the Pope for not providing for Franceschetto show how he would have felt if Giovanni had not behaved like a man of the world. And from the first it was clear that Giovanni was meant to serve his family, for with him went not only Gentile Becchi and his tutor, Michelozzo, son of the architect, who, with his brother, formed part of the Medici household, but Filippo Valori and Lorenzo's intimate councillor, Pier Filippo Pandolfini. The first night Giovanni spent at his abbey of Passignano. He was given a splendid reception all along the route. The Orsini especially honoured him, Virginio, the head of the clan, riding out eight miles from his castle of Bracciano to meet him. From S. Maria del Popolo, the boy tells Lorenzo, he went to the Vatican, and was escorted back from his audience with the Pope by all the cardinals and nearly the whole court, "as well as by drenching rain, to the Campo dei Fiori". Here the Orsini Palazzo dell'Orlogio had been prepared for him by Nofri Tornabuoni in a style not too sumptuous. He had written an interesting account of the requirements of a cardinal at the beginning of the year, which suggests advice to a freshman or to a freshman's father from a college tutor.

Lorenzo's friends wrote that Giovanni made an excellent impression, but the d'Este orator, who was no friend, said that it could hardly have been worse and hoped that young Ippolito would be taught to make a better. Giovanni's Latin was, he said, so bad that it set the whole court laughing. Probably the truth lay half way between the two. He was certainly unusually backward for a Medici, far more backward than his brother Piero. His letters are muddled, and entirely innocent of punctuation, showing no gift for expression. At the beginning of

this very year, while still at Pisa, he wrote to Lorenzo's secretary, Piero Dovizi da Bibbiena, telling him that he was not writing to his father, as he would be ashamed to send him such a letter. Except when writing to his family, he employed a secretary. As a boy he was lazy and easy-going, nor, apparently, had his years at Pisa served to make up the deficiencies in his education. On reaching Rome he had been met at the Porta del Popolo by the meticulous Papal Master of the Ceremonies, Johannes Burchard, who had been sent by the Pope to coach him in his behaviour. Burchard pronounced him admirably trained, but suggested, as he often had to do to other Cardinals, that he should enlarge his tonsure.

Lorenzo's condition had long been grave. Four years earlier an ambassador wrote that his gout was so bad that he cried out with pain and could not bear anyone speaking to him. Pieraccini diagnoses his main trouble as acute arthritis. In 1492, when at Bagni a Vignone, a friend wrote to Piero that it gave them some comfort to hear him sing and "he will now sing more, as Baccio Ugolini arrived last night and will join with him". Ficino once heard him sing some things not unlike the *laudi*, "inspired, I believe, by a divine fury", and that in spite of his harsh, nasal voice.

About two months before his death, while he and Politian were discussing philosophy, he had declared in a fit of enthusiasm and weariness of his work that he would spend the rest of his life with him and Ficino and Pico away from the city and all its noise. When Politian said that his advice and authority were needed more every day, he answered with a smile, "I shall find a substitute in your pupil and put the burden on his shoulders." Politian said Piero was too young, but Lorenzo praised his ability and manner and the good grounding Politian had given him. Remarks of this kind, spoken in intimacy, need not be taken too literally, but they bring out Lorenzo's

Death-mask of Lorenzo il Magnifico
Sac, Colombaria, Firenze

genuine enthusiasm for his many interests, each of which occupied all his attention for the time being.

By February, 1492, his whole body, except his head, was affected by the pain, which was almost unendurable. When Giovanni left he told Valoti that he committed his son to his charge ; " me you will never see again ". On March 31st he was carried to Careggi, where so many of the Medici died. The doctors did not expect the attack to be fatal, though want of sleep made it serious. Ferrante of Naples wrote anxiously, earnestly praying that he would recover, so that they might both enjoy peace, especially peace of mind. Soon it became clear that there was no hope. The best account of his last days is to be found in Politian's letter to Jacopo Antiquario, which, with its characteristic imaginative touch, breathes the real grief of an affectionate friend and is a speaking tribute to Lorenzo's qualities of heart and head. Some critics contend that it cannot be trusted, being in the nature of an apology, but it seems to me to be a genuine expression of Politian's deep affection for his patron.

On hearing that there was no hope, Lorenzo at once sent for a priest and when he came with the sacrament, insisted on getting out of bed to meet the Host. Helped by the servants, he staggered into the hall, where he fell upon his knees and prayed fervently, shedding many tears, as did all those present. The priest ordered him to be carried back to bed to receive the Viaticum in comfort. At first he refused, but ended by obeying. He began by trying to comfort Piero, then, after lying quiet and thoughtful for a time, he dismissed the others and talked with him alone, giving him much sound advice for his future guidance. Meanwhile Lazzaro of Pavia, a famous doctor, had arrived from Milan, having been sent by Ludovico Sforza ; but it was too late. Lorenzo asked what he was doing. Politian answered that he was concocting a mixture of pounded precious

stones to relieve him. "Recognizing my voice, he looked up brightly at me, as he always did, exclaiming, 'Why, Angelo'. With difficulty he raised his enfeebled arms and firmly grasped both my hands. I tried to hide my tears and sobs, which I could not check, by turning away my head. Quite unmoved, he pressed my hands again and again. But when he saw that my tears prevented me from attending to him, he gradually and as if naturally let them go. I rushed into the next room where I could give full rein to my grief and tears. As soon as I had pulled myself together a little I went back. When he saw me, and he saw me at once, he called me to him again and asked me what his dear Pico della Mirandola was doing. I answered that he was in town, as he did not want to bother him. 'If I did not think it would be a trouble for him to come', he answered, 'I should like to see him and talk to him for the last time, before I leave you.' 'Shall I send for him?' 'Please, as soon as possible.' I did so : he came and sat down and I knelt near him to catch the failing voice of my patron for the last time. . . . Bone Deus, with what courtesy, what kindness, almost with what caresses did he welcome him ! First he asked him to forgive him for troubling him ; he must consider it a proof of his love and affection ; he would breathe his last more willingly after he had sated his dying eyes with gazing on the man he loved so well. Then he fell to talking in his old, familiar way, even joking a little with us. Then, looking at us both, 'I wish', he said to Pico, 'that I could have lived to see your library finished.' Scarcely had Pico left when Girolamo of Ferrara, a man distinguished for his learning and his holy life, and a noted preacher, entered the room and exhorted him to remain firm in the faith, to live a life of righteousness, if he were spared, and to resign himself to death, if it were inevitable : he answered that his faith was steadfast, that he would assuredly strive to lead such

a life and that nothing did he desire more, if it were the will of God, than death. He was already going when Lorenzo said, 'Father, bless me before you go.' With bowed head and humble look and every appearance of piety he answered the friar's words and his prayers appropriately and correctly without being affected by the sorrow which his servants no longer tried to conceal. You would have said that everyone was dying except himself. He alone gave no sign of grief or fear or sorrow, preserving his usual vigour and strength of mind, his equability and fortitude to his last breath. . . . He even joked about his death. When someone gave him something to eat and asked how he liked it, he answered, 'as well as a dying man can'. Then he embraced us all tenderly, asking forgiveness if, owing to his illness, he had been trying or troublesome to anyone. . . . When the Gospel describing the passion of Christ was read, he showed that he understood by moving his lips or raising his failing eyes or sometimes by moving his fingers. He died gazing upon a crucifix beautifully inlaid with pearls and precious stones, kissing it from time to time."

Here we have the true Lorenzo as known to his intimates, kindly, simple, appreciative and affectionate. And what a death-scene for the Renaissance: Pico, Politian and Savanarola, the famous Lombard physician with his compound of precious stones and the heavily jewelled crucifix.

There is also the legend, for it is nothing more, though, like other legends, it contains some truth in the form of its parable, that, when Savonarola was summoned to the bedside of the dying Lorenzo, he said he had three things on his conscience, the taking of the money from the Monte delle Doti, the sack of Volterra and the executions after the conspiracy of the Pazzi. On these points the friar reassured him, then he said that in his turn he must have three things from him: first, a living faith in

God's mercy. This Lorenzo had. Secondly, he must restore all that he had taken, or bid his sons do so for him. Lorenzo was surprised and distressed, but finally consented. Lastly, he must restore liberty to the people of Florence. At this Lorenzo turned his back upon him, whereupon the friar left without giving him absolution. The story is absurd, for Lorenzo had already received absolution, and is contradicted by Politian's letter. Had it been true, Lorenzo's body would not have been taken to S. Marco before the funeral. It is said to have come from Savonarola's devoted disciple, Fra Silvestro, who went to the stake with him, and it is just such a legend as one would expect to grow up among the followers of the friar. It has been suggested that Lorenzo's real reason for sending for Savonarola was the hope of conciliating the most formidable member of the opposition for the sake of Piero. It was not till after his death that the friar began to denounce the Medici tyranny.

Lorenzo died on April 8th, 1492, at the age of forty-three. His body was taken at once to S. Marco, whence it was carried in procession by the monks to S. Lorenzo and buried in the sacristy with the utmost simplicity, in accordance with family tradition, as he had wished. No monument was erected to him. Possibly he needed one less than any member of his House. His death was a serious loss not merely to Florence, but to Italy, for he was universally recognized as her foremost statesman. Perhaps old Ferrante's comment is the best tribute to his influence, "He has lived long enough for his own undying fame, but not long enough for Italy. I only hope that now that he has gone no one will attempt what they would not have ventured to do while he was alive." And even those who had differences with him regretted his death, for though, says Guicciardini, the city under him was not free, it could not have had a better or milder tyranny. While he was the cause of

endless blessings owing to his natural goodness and his amiable character, the few evils were inseparable from a tyranny and were only such as were inevitable. His greatness was undoubted, continues Guicciardini, for Florence never had a citizen to compare with him, and all thoughtful men were uneasy about the future without him. His passing is said to have been marked by a number of omens portending evil to come. The cathedral was struck by lightning and some large blocks of marble dislodged ; a meteor appeared over Careggi ; the lions fell to fighting in their enclosure with extraordinary ferocity.

Pier Leone, Lorenzo's physician, was accused of poisoning him without the slightest proof. It was almost impossible for a prominent person to die during the Renaissance without some such charge being brought. But it was thought advisable to open the body, which was said to show no signs of such foul play. Pier Leone, however, had to be smuggled out of Florence to save his life. The day after Lorenzo's death he was found drowned in a well : it is virtually certain that he committed suicide.

At the Requiem Mass in Rome in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Giovanni was so overcome that he had to retire. Franco wrote in profound grief to Piero. God alone could comfort him ; he continues in a positively baroque style, "God has permitted you to enjoy this great treasure with such increase of your happiness and, without asking a farthing of interest, has left it you freely, only taking back his original capital and trading with it still in heavenly merchandise in Paradise for you at great profit.

. . . . Madonna and the cardinal are well, thank God : you would be touched to see them forcing themselves to hide their grief to comfort each other."

CHAPTER XVI

PIERO THE UNFORTUNATE

(1492-4)

LUCKY all his life, Lorenzo was particularly lucky in the time of his death. He had long enjoyed a unique reputation as the arbiter of Italy, above all as the chief force making for peace. The position of the Medici in a city "most free of speech and abounding in the keenest and most restless brains" depended largely on success. With the shrinking of Italian trade and the growing economic difficulties both of the Commune and himself, peace was essential. In the troubled years that followed, even the cool, clear-headed Guicciardini looked back across the chaos on this, the most brilliant ruler of his day, as the embodiment of a golden age; and though the sober facts tell a different tale, at least Italy was then independent of the foreigner. It was affirmed that, had Lorenzo lived, she might have been spared the disasters that followed and, at least, we may be sure that the course of events would have been different.

Unquestionably Lorenzo's death marks the end of an epoch. In 1492 Columbus discovered America and Ferdinand of Aragon captured Granada, thus uniting Spain, as France was already united; then shortly afterwards Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope. All these events, whether politically or financially, boded ill for Italy. More ominous still, only a few days before his death Cosimo Sassetti informed Lorenzo from Paris that an embassy had arrived from Ludovico Sforza to ask whether Charles would help him against Ferrante of Naples and Alfonso of Calabria, who were described as allies not

only of the Pope, but of Lorenzo. This despatch and a letter from Charles, expressing complete confidence in Lorenzo, did not reach Florence till after his death.

Piero was duly invited to succeed his father and given the same powers. He was twenty-one, Giovanni sixteen, Giuliano thirteen. A ruling Medici needed far greater parts than a ruling monarch : respect for Lorenzo had long carried more weight than a legal penalty : and it was soon clear that, even in time of peace, Piero was not the man for the work. Lorenzo is reported to have said that he had three sons, one good (Giuliano, Duc de Nemours), one wise (Cardinal Giovanni), one a fool (Piero), while, according to Guicciardini, he regretfully told his intimates that the stupidity and pride of his first-born might bring about the downfall of the Medici. The fears of the family are confirmed by the letter of condolence from Rome, written in excellent Latin, doubtless by a secretary, in which the young cardinal hopes that Piero will behave as he should like and be affable and polite to everyone.

Piero had, of course, been admirably educated. Intellectually he was distinctly more gifted than Giovanni, to whom we see him, as he describes in a boyish letter, teaching Virgil's Eclogues. Though without his father's touch of genius, he had a natural facility in writing verse which was not uncommon at that time in Italy and which, in his case, amounted almost to a talent for improvisation. Though hot-tempered and resentful, he bore no grudge for the most villainous insults heaped upon himself in the rhyming competitions in which he liked to take part. He was also an eloquent and attractive speaker and a good talker. Yet every day he showed himself less fitted for his task. Tall and strongly built, with a quick eye and a sure hand, he was a notable athlete. In riding and jousting, at football and the Italian ball game of *pallone*, he could hold his own with the best. Of football especially he was passionately fond,

sending for the best players from all over Italy to try his strength with them in the streets and squares of Florence ; but in Renaissance Florence a young man who spent his time in this way was regarded as a waster. These tastes he probably owed to the Orsini ; indeed, he would have made an excellent hard-hitting condottiere, such as the Orsini produced in numbers. Unfortunately, he also inherited his mother's pride and temper, which he was quite unable to control. He had none of the easy-going kindness of the typical Florentine. His "foreign ways, too insolent and proud for our method of living ", were fostered by his wife, Alfonsina, who was as proud and dominating a woman as was then to be found in Italy.

Following Sforza tradition, Ludovico was profuse in his offers of support, possibly in the hope of detaching Piero from Naples. The Pope now made Giovanni not only legate of the Patrimony of S. Peter, but also of Tuscany, so that he might return home and help his brother. There he divided his time between the Medici villas and his own abbeys, enjoying the hunting. Already Castrocaro had written to the Florentine envoy in Rome to remonstrate with Giovanni upon his way of life. He was still the comfortable Giovanni, late to bed and late to rise, and probably eating too much.

Then, in July, came the death of Innocent VIII. At first Florence, Venice and Milan managed to present a united front. The Conclave resolved itself into a conflict between Naples and Milan. Piero did not hesitate. Following in the footsteps of Lorenzo—the Medici children, by the way, called their father by his Christian name—he wrote ironically that he was well aware of "the steadfastness of Sig. Ludovico and the poison of the King ", whose presence to the South of Florentine territory was always a danger, while Ludovico had never given anything but promises. The Government concurred in his support

of Naples and Giovanni was bidden to vote for the king's candidate.

Giovanni, however, resented his brother's attitude, especially his placing him in charge of Niccolò Michelozzi, an experienced and valuable servant of Lorenzo, and upset all plans by supporting Ascanio Sforza, who knew well how to win him and who had done much to get him his red hat. However, he ended by yielding to Piero. But when Ascanio, seeing that he had no chance, threw all his weight into the scale of Borgia, thus ensuring his success, Giovanni again transferred his vote to him, but it was then too late for it to be of value. Piero was thoroughly dissatisfied both with the result of the Conclave and with his brother's conduct, though Valori had praised him for ending by supporting Ascanio, and he wrote an angry letter to Valori, bidding him give certain orders to Giovanni. The young cardinal was very upset at Piero writing of him in this way to the ambassador, and sent him a characteristic autograph reply, innocent of all stops.

After complaining of Piero setting a tutor over him, he goes on, "Piero all these things together with this cursed election have upset me so much that I don't think there is a more wretched man alive and really I am right and would to God these complaints of mine were as idle as yours of me I wish to tell you these few things firstly that I could manage our business here as well as anyone and I am also a cardinal and you should treat me with some respect at least for the sake of my dignity when having orders given me because you should remember and not imitate Sig. Ludovico in his treatment of Ascanio because I am as much a cardinal as Ascanio I do not think you are or want to be Sig. Ludovico I am very annoyed at all this because I see that you pay so little regard to me." There is something pathetic in this boy cardinal, who was soon to be glad to leave Rome for Florence because he found that he had

become the merest cipher there, likening himself to the powerful Ascanio ; but it is tragic to think of the destinies of Florence being in the hands of a couple of unfledged lads at such a time.

Meanwhile Piero was "every day showing himself less fitted for the life of a citizen and the government of a republic". Nor was he fortunate in his choice of ministers. The chief of these was Ser Piero Dovizi of Bibbiena, elder brother of Giovanni's tutor and life-long friend, who became Cardinal Bibbiena. They had been brought up in the Medici household. Ser Piero was a man of wisdom and experience, but his pretentiousness made him many enemies. It was thanks to him that Piero mortally offended the Soderini, loyal friends of the Medici. When Pagolantonio Soderini told Piero that he thought of marrying his son Tommaso to the daughter of the wealthy Filippo Strozzi, thus consulting him as he would have done Lorenzo, Piero said that he was delighted. But when Dovizi warned him that Lorenzo would not have permitted such a union of wealth and position, Piero upbraided Soderini so insolently after the match had been already arranged that he struck Piero in the face. For once Piero restrained himself, remembering Lorenzo's warning that it was as well to ride this high-mettled people gently, but it was not long before Pagolantonio was sent as ambassador to Venice.

Piero appears in a better light in a long letter to Alfonso of Aragon, who had offered him an estate and title in his kingdom of Naples :—

" Your Majesty knows that my ancestors have lived as private citizens by their trade and their estates, nor have I any desire for a station above that of a simple citizen. I have no intention of degenerating from them in this way. Forgive me for refusing your offer. If you still wish to confer a favour upon me, deign to do so in the ordinary way, as you may think best, through those who manage my bank. . . . I am

not worthy of such high favours, nor do I desire to be a baron." Piero was Medici enough to see the folly of offending his countrymen by accepting a Neapolitan barony and possessed of sufficient self-respect to realize that a Medici like himself would not be honoured by such a gift; but he was characteristically ready to turn the king's favour to the profit of the bank.

Savonarola continued to preach to crowded congregations. Except with a few chosen spirits, it was to the success of his prophecies that he owed his popularity. Nothing wins the respect of the crowd in a preacher, as in other walks of life, more certainly than a gift for predicting the future, and the not very remarkable fact that two of the three decrepit rulers whose death Savonarola had predicted, Lorenzo and Innocent VIII, had recently passed away, while Ferrante's age and infirmities made it improbable that he would last long, made a deep impression. In any case his attacks on tyrannical governments and the evil lives of great princes and great prelates, his passionate preaching of repentance of sins and his denunciations of evil to come, did much to weaken the hold of the Medici upon the people, who had hitherto regarded them as their champions, without his needing to denounce them personally. There was no open breach, but Piero had him transferred to Bologna for the Lent sermons of 1493, whence he wrote to S. Marco that he felt like a turtle-dove waiting for spring. Fra Mariano preached that Lent in Florence. Yet Piero supported Savonarola's request to Rome for the separation of the Tuscan Dominicans from those of Lombardy in order to re-establish the old simplicity and discipline and Savonarola wrote him a warm letter of thanks. It would now be impossible to get Savonarola out of Florence if he proved troublesome. Whether consciously or not, this step showed an unusual amount of the wisdom of the serpent on the part of the friar.

The political situation was difficult enough in all conscience and might have troubled a far wiser head than Piero's, but from the first he mishandled it. Alfonso of Calabria's personal dislike of Ludovico Sforza, added to the way in which he treated his daughter and her nonentity of a husband, Gian Galeazzo Sforza, the rightful Duke, were straining the relations between Milan and Naples more and more. Ludovico, anxious to prevent a break, suggested that Milan, Florence, Naples and Ferrara should send a joint embassy to congratulate the new Pope, Alexander VI. Florence began by consenting, but Piero, who was preparing to lead a particularly splendid embassy to Rome himself, disliked the idea ; he is also said to have been influenced by Gentile Becchi, Bishop of Arezzo, who had prepared a great oration for the occasion. So he wrote to Ferrante, asking him to tell Ludovico that they would go separately. Ferrante did as requested, being careful to add that the suggestion came from Piero, thus awakening the suspicions of Ludovico at this intimacy between Naples and Florence. It proved yet another link in the chain that was drawing him towards France. The details belong to the history of Milan.

Charles VIII of France had long been dreaming of an expedition to assert his rights as the heir of the Angevins to the kingdom of Naples ; but this was to be merely a stepping-stone to a great crusade against the Turks. The French court was divided. The older and wiser heads were bitterly opposed to a scheme so wild and foolhardy, whereas the king's intimates and the younger nobles encouraged him and abetted him. Weak as Charles was, his enthusiasm for the expedition had soon reached such a pitch that it would have been almost impossible to stop him, and the arrival at his court of the masterful Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, who threw all his weight into the scale of the expedition as the preliminary of the Council which should depose his mortal enemy,

the Pope, put an end to any hesitation. So incapable was the king of understanding the intrigues that were going on at court about the expedition that the able Florentine ambassador says he was ashamed to write on the matter. When Ludovico, as usual, vacillated—very clever, but very timid, says Commines, “and very supple, when he is afraid”—a French mission was sent to tour the various Italian courts. When it visited Florence, ostensibly to offer condolences on the death of Lorenzo, a formal request was made that the king should be granted a free passage through Florentine territory, with the right to buy provisions. Florence, was the reply, did not mean to give up her alliance with Naples or to endanger her merchants there; apart from this, she would do all she could for the king.

It was on this occasion (1494) that occurred the quarrel between Piero and his cousins. The younger branch, the descendants of Cosimo's brother Lorenzo, had hitherto lived quietly, enjoying and increasing their great wealth and making themselves popular in the Medici way. But Giovanni di Pier Francesco, considered the handsomest man of his day in Florence, was pushing, restless and ambitious and eager to outshine Piero, who was a little his junior. His brother, Lorenzo, was quiet and followed his lead. The two branches had hitherto been on excellent terms, but Giovanni was the last man to put up with Piero's insolence, and they clashed. There is a story of Piero having boxed Giovanni's ears in a quarrel about a girl at a ball. Like most Florentines, the cousins were strongly French in sympathy. Charles had made one of them a chamberlain, the other a steward and given them both pensions. They are also said to have corresponded with Ludovico, and they entertained one of the French ambassadors on his way to Milan. They were arrested and, on whatever grounds, the Council declared that their offence merited death. However, Piero preferred to banish

them to their villas. When they were released from prison, he walked home between them and was far from pleased to see the large crowd that had escorted him to his own palace follow his cousins, after he had parted from them, with every mark of sympathy and respect, to their homes. So outraged was the French mission that they hesitated about going on to Florence, till Ludovico urged them. Possibly Piero's leniency may have been due to fear of France. At their villas these wealthy young Medici cousins gave splendid entertainments. They were regarded as leaders of the French party and had their own representatives in France.

Bishop Becchi was now sent to France as ambassador with Soderini, where he made one of his wonderful orations, so that the king, who enjoyed a pun of his own making, declared that he had never heard "si bon bec". They warned Piero of the danger of his attitude, since Naples would be powerless to protect him. If Charles wins, all is up with Italy : "tutta a bordello" : if the Florentines refuse him a passage, the French will hate them for ever and their merchants will suffer. But Becchi was still sceptical about the expedition and Piero eagerly caught at his doubts, since they flattered his own hopes. But not for long. Becchi is soon writing that it is settled and will be formidable. The French artillery was far better than anything hitherto seen in Italy, as Becchi's successor, Piero Capponi, truthfully warned Piero. The Capponi were the most formidable banking rivals of the Medici at Lyons and Commines considers that Capponi did his best to embitter Charles against Piero.

Piero's position was difficult in the extreme. French writers like Perrens and Delaborde, with their instinctive chauvinism, blame him for not siding with Charles, yet we may doubt whether he was not, after all, following his father's policy. No one knew better than Lorenzo the worthlessness of Ludovico's support and Piero may also have known that, as lord

of Genoa, he had designs on Sarzanella, as well as on Pisa, which had once belonged to the Visconti. Naples had long been the best ally of Florence and no one would have been more anxious to keep the foreigner out of Italy than Lorenzo. Yet France was the chief centre of the foreign trade of Florence and the Medici's own business, while the sympathies of the Florentines were markedly French. Their experience of the Neapolitans and of Alfonso of Calabria had left a nasty taste behind it and they as yet knew nothing of the terrors of French methods of warfare. They realized the profits they would have made by supporting the French, if they succeeded, and they resented having to find money to keep them out. In any case, Piero's policy of temporizing was fatal. It irritated and embittered the French, while his habit of continually talking of his good intentions towards them aroused the suspicions of Naples and the Pope.

Early in 1494 died Ferrante of Naples, his last hours darkened by the evils he had long foreseen. At the moment, as if unable to realize the seriousness of the situation, Piero was busy organizing a tournament on the most sumptuous scale. In April he went to Pisa to recover from a passion for a young lady, writing that he refused to think about "the salvation of the state or the city or the peace of Italy".² Is this an early effort at imitation of his father in a fit of irritability without the same excuse? The Pope, meanwhile, who could speak from experience, urged him not to go to his pleasures by night, but give himself wholly up to the state, like Lorenzo or Cosimo.

The French were not deceived by Piero's indefinite refusals to give them a definite answer, and in June Spinelli, with the rest of the Medici banking agents, was expelled from Lyons; but, if the bank could not use its credit, at least it was not obliged to pay its

² Picotti, *La Giovinezza di Leone X*, p. 354. Picotti gives a number of fresh details about this period.

debts. Charles thus drove a wedge between the Medici and their countrymen, on the advice, it is said, of Ludovico Sforza, and saved French credit by permitting the other Florentines to remain. The French sympathies of the city of the lilies were well known and Commines wrote to tell Spinelli how welcome the Florentines would be as allies.

From the first fortune went against the allies and the frightfulness of the French, who slaughtered all the inhabitants of Rapallo, even the sick, after its capture, was an unpleasant awakening to the Italians, accustomed to the gentler methods of the condottieri: even the ruthless Sir John Hawkwood said that a soldier fought to live. Charles reached Asti on September 9th, having at last been persuaded to tear himself from the ladies of Lyons, with his empty purse and his formidable army, the backbone of which were the Swiss, and his still more formidable artillery. The French guns, drawn by horses and firing iron shot, had a mobility and a rapidity of fire that were quite unknown to the Italians, with their clumsy ox-drawn bombards and their stone balls. Here he was joined by Ludovico Sforza and his wife Beatrice d'Este, with a train of the most charming ladies of Milan, for his gallantry was well known. He cut a poor figure among the Italians, who set great store by appearance, small and stooping, with a slavering mouth and a clumsy nose, rickety spindle shanks and the wide slippers, imitated by his courtiers, which he was said to wear because he had six toes. He could scarcely read or write. The dignity of the royal glance was his one redeeming feature. But he was kindly, and the ladies, since he was the king, found him gracious and saw to it that he enjoyed himself.

Relations between Ludovico and the French, especially the Duc d'Orléans, who claimed Milan through his grandmother, Valentina Visconti, soon became strained. The pair had taken an instant dislike to each other, not unnaturally, since Louis

claimed Milan. Nor were they improved by the news of the death of the king's cousin, the young Duke of Milan, which was attributed to poison ; the case looked blacker when Ludovico had himself at once proclaimed Duke in his nephew's place, though Gian Galeazzo's condition was such that it is quite likely that he died from natural causes. Charles, who was at Piacenza, on his way to Tuscany, was really moved. Here he was joined by Piero's cousins, who had escaped from their villas and who told him that there would be a rising in Florence.

The coming of Charles, the new Cyrus who should march from end to end of Italy without drawing sword and reform the Church, was the first great triumph of Savonarola, the crowning proof of the truth of his prophecies. Men remembered his vision of the hand grasping a sword and the voice exclaiming, "Behold, the sword of the Lord upon the earth, swiftly and soon." They turned to him now in this hour of trial. In a long series of sermons he had been building a mystical Ark of Noah, in which the faithful should be saved, lingering over the details, with the result that by September 29th, when the French were already in Italy, he was to preach on the flood. The cathedral was crowded as never before. When he thundered from the pulpit, "Behold, I will send the waters upon the earth," there were cries of terror in the congregation. Such was the effect, says Pico della Mirandola, that he shuddered and his hair began to bristle.

Piero, meanwhile, appealed to the friendship of Commines and even endeavoured to induce Louis d'Orléans to attack Milan, but he had fallen ill. Charles had advanced to Pontremoli, taking some castles and sacking Fivizzano as Orléans had sacked Rapallo ; for, in spite of Savonarola's prophecy, he had to do some fighting. The Neapolitans were neither able nor willing to help their allies. Piero answered the French envoys evasively, but refused

to let the army pass through Tuscany or buy food. The city was growing restive and when they saw Piero playing football in the public streets the Florentines began to grumble, cursing him body and soul, says an ambassador, and speaking of him worse than of the Turk. The exclusion of Florentine gold thread, cloth of gold and silk from France had by October thrown so many out of work and caused such discontent as had long been unknown. No wonder Piero found it hard to raise money from the merchants. It was generally held that to refuse Charles a free passage was sheer madness. Even the friends of the Medici were unwilling to untie their purse strings, for Piero had shown himself so incapable that he had forfeited the confidence of everyone. No attempt had been made to oppose the French, who were in the lonely, desolate Lunigiana and would have to traverse the difficult, narrow road by the strong fortresses of Sarzana and Pietrasanta, nor was there any hope of help. All Piero did was to send Paolo Orsini to reinforce Sarzana. Becchi was amazed at the despair in which he found Piero and Dovizi on his return towards the end of October. Piero felt that he needed extreme unction, says a chronicler, without realizing that he was sick to death.

Piero now determined to follow his father's example and throw himself on the mercy of the king of France. It would be difficult to imagine a feebler course. One sees the different spirit of father and son in Piero's exclamation, when he made his decision, "Every man for himself." The imitation went further, for he left Florence without informing the government, writing to the Eight from Empoli that, by placing himself in the hands of the Most Christian King, he hoped the more easily to appease the anger and hatred he had conceived against Florence. He will welcome death in the service of his country. Piero was an admirable letter-writer. To Alfonso's envoy he said that, being powerless to serve him,

"I have determined to prove myself still his servant by this act of despair. . . . Perhaps I shall be more useful to him in the presence of the king of France than at the head of the state."

At Pisa he learnt that Pietrasanta was being besieged and wrote off for reinforcements, though he meant all along to give up the fortresses. The true Piero appears in his remark to Dovizi, that he would waste his time and perhaps lose his life, if he had nothing to offer but what had already been taken. On October 30th he was conducted to the king. He was ready to buy French support at any price, surrendering Sarzanella and Pietrasanta, as well as Pisa and Leghorn, almost without being asked and without any authority so to do, ordering their commanders to hand them over at once. He also promised an indemnity of 200,000 ducats. The treaty was to be signed "dentro alla gran villa", as Charles called Florence. Commines says that, if Sarzanella had held out, so barren was the country, that the French would have been broken, adding that even the Frenchmen who negotiated the treaty laughed at Piero, unable to conceal their contempt at his giving up so much without a struggle. The conviction grew that the expedition was especially favoured by Providence, "if the follies and the errors of man deserve such excuses", and certainly, in the then state of Italy, it was bound to succeed. Next day Ludovico Sforza appeared in camp, expecting to be given Pisa, and possibly the fortresses. When Charles showed no intention of giving them, Ludovico began to think of turning upon his ally and soon embarked upon the negotiations which showed the adaptability of Italian diplomacy and ultimately effected the expulsion of the French from Italy.

Piero's absence from Florence at such a time would, in any case, have been a grave mistake. In October the General of the Servites, an old friend, had written, warning him that, as he has often said, there were two

things common to the generous House of Medici, gout and tribulation, and in his case it looked as if tribulation would come first. He ends his letter, "I say that Piero is not Lorenzo." It was not, perhaps, the kindest way to write at such a time, but the friends of the family were alarmed at the strength of the feeling that was growing against Piero.

The cardinal took his place. He had been enjoying himself at Passignano and among the Medici villas. Possibly Piero had no wish for his help and Giovanni may well have found his brother's overbearing manner trying. In August he wrote a boyish letter to Bernardo Dovizi, delighted with some excellent hawks and grateful for the news. But he will not talk politics, only pray God to guide Piero aright. In Florence he had no influence. Piero wrote to Dovizi, not to his brother.

The news of the treaty caused consternation and indignation in Florence, for hitherto the French guns had made but little impression on the fortresses. Humiliating as was the surrender, the indignation it aroused was as nothing compared with the fury of the merchant city at having to raise the enormous indemnity. But as yet Florence had not found a leader. Instinctively men turned to Savonarola to help them in the tribulations he had prophesied. The people at large had no longer the slightest doubt that he was inspired by God and trembled at his words, though there were not a few among the educated who blamed him for claiming such inspiration. "Behold, the sword has come," he began on November 1st. "The prophecies are being fulfilled, the scourges are beginning; behold, the Lord is leading these armies. O Florence, the time for songs and dances is over; now is the time to weep rivers of tears for your sins. . . . Do penance, give alms, pray and unite." And he continued, with his spasmodic bursts of fiery eloquence, to ring the changes on the theme of repentance. The effect of

these sermons in calming the city can hardly be exaggerated. To the majority of the inhabitants they were the one comfort amid the general despair.

At a meeting of the Seventy nothing effective was suggested till Piero Capponi, who was no friend of the Medici, rose to speak. With his white hair and vigorous appearance he held his audience at once, for he was known to be a man of few words, but of great force of character. "Piero dei Medici is no longer fit to rule the State; the Republic must look to itself; it is time that we put an end to this rule of boys." Others ascribe the phrase to Jacopo Nerli. But it was soon clear that the leading men meant to seize the power of the Medici and set up a government not unlike that under the Albizzi. They must send an embassy, he went on, of men whom Charles would respect, but at the same time be prepared to resist, if need be. Above all, they must send Frate Girolamo Savonarola, to whom the people are devoted.

Piero had been included in the first embassy sent on November 2nd to give an air of legality to his proceedings, when it became known that Charles intended to come to Florence, to bid him welcome. Charles refused to receive it, but it was not yet known that he had separated Piero from Florence. The French quartermasters were already in the city, marking the houses for billets, without consulting the inhabitants. Charles was to go to the Medici palace.

The embassy started, Capponi being one of the five and Savonarola, who insisted on going on foot, another. They found the king at Pisa, where he had been welcomed as a deliverer. Savonarola made him an elaborate harangue and probably caused him no little embarrassment by pointing out that he had come as an emissary of God, in fulfilment of his prophecies, and that he was to reform the Church. Did the great friar, when he was ushered into the presence of this miserable specimen of a monarch, "more like a

monster than a man", really believe him to be the instrument of the Lord, coming not only to scourge Italy, but to reform the Church? Religious fanaticism, pride and self-satisfaction with his own prophecies could hardly go further. Charles announced that he was coming to Florence, "la gran villa", where everything would be settled; he probably had only the haziest idea of the whole business. But he made no promises, for he was bound to Piero by sympathy as a fellow ruler, and also by gratitude, a quality in which he was by no means lacking.

Piero took alarm on seeing that the envoys paid him no attention. After renewing his promise to find Charles the 200,000 ducats at once and urging the king to stand by him, he bade his brother-in-law Paolo Orsini assemble his men, engage others and proceed to Florence. He is said to have intended to get control of the state by means of a *parlamento*, as his wife and her Orsini relatives had urged him to do. He reached Florence, apparently in high spirits at his agreement with the king, and was welcomed with tears and laughter by the family; he distributed cakes and wine among the large crowd that gathered outside the palace. But before the officials he was crestfallen and ill at ease, trying to justify his action, as if they were his judges. Next day he came to the Palazzo della Signoria with his usual escort, but was told that the Signoria was at dinner and could not receive him. So nonplussed was he by this rebuff that some of his friends among them tried to cheer him. He came back about the time of Vespers, found the palace shut and was told that he might enter alone by the postern. Surprised and alarmed, he retreated. His enemies began shouting "Popolo, popolo" from the windows and the few people about with the street arabs began jeering and throwing stones at him as he took shelter, completely cowed, among his escort. The chairman, loyal to the Medici, refused to give up the keys of the tower so that the

bell could be rung, but they were forced from him. Shops were shut, houses barricaded and men came hurrying to the Piazza, armed with strange, antiquated weapons.

At this moment appeared Francesco Valori, just back from an embassy to Pisa. Eager and impetuous, "with more dash than brains, he was a born leader of a revolution". He had been devoted to Lorenzo, but Piero's behaviour and Savonarola's influence had completely changed him. He addressed the crowd from his mule, telling them that at first the king had received him well, then, thanks to Piero, his attitude had changed. The crowd, led by him, encountered the Bargello, disarmed him and forced him to give up his prisoners: then they pillaged the arsenal and armed themselves. The Medici and the Tornabuoni and their men also armed, but their "Palle, palle!" met with hardly any response, and they took refuge in the Medici palace. Piero gave them no lead. What, after all, could he do? He had wisely left Orsini and his men at the Porta S. Gallo, for force would have been worse than useless. Meanwhile Giovanni was riding about at the head of some troops and citizens, shouting "Popolo e libertà". Picotti, who rarely has a good word for him, thinks that he was trying to save himself at the expense of Piero and secure his position and the life he loved in Florence; more probably he did the first thing that came into his head as likely to help. In due course he met Valori's men, there was a clash and several were wounded. When he found that no respect was paid to his red hat, he retreated. Giuliano had been left at the Porta S. Gallo and Giovanni, on reaching the palace, found that Piero had already fled. He stayed on in Florence and Landucci saw "el povero cardinale Giovanetto" at his window, praying, with his hands clasped. "I was much touched by the sight and gathered that he was a good lad of sound principles." Though they stored many of his

valuables, the monks of S. Marco refused to shelter him, even temporarily. Finally, disguised as a Franciscan, he fled to Città di Castello, where he was welcomed by the Vitelli.

Piero had made for Bologna. Most of his escort abandoned him before reaching the frontier, from fear of being ill-treated by the peasantry. Giovanni Bentivoglio, soon to fly no less ignominiously, received him contemptuously with the remark that he would rather have been cut to pieces than abandon his state. Here he was joined by Giovanni and his cousin Giulio, the Knight of Rhodes, who was a student at Pisa and who thenceforth attached himself to the cardinal.

The Medici palace and gardens were sacked, even to the cellars, as was the cardinal's house at S. Antonio, and the houses of some of the least popular adherents of the family. The Signoria itself set the example, among its loot being 20,000 ducats in boxes. The Sieur de Ballasant, who was in charge of the arrangements for billeting the king, took the opportunity of recouping himself handsomely for the sums the Lyons bank owed him. Commines says that treasure worth 100,000 ducats was pillaged. Giovanni Popolano bought up a good deal from the plunderers, for the younger branch were also liberal patrons of art.

Piero soon made his way to Venice, where he was given an honourable welcome and well treated. The Venetians were doubtful about receiving him, but Commines, who was French ambassador there, reassured them. Having greatly admired Lorenzo, he was moved by the fall of this family after sixty years of almost royal power when he saw Piero arrive with practically nothing, dressed in the clothes of a valet. Piero complained bitterly to him of the ingratitude of a servant, who had refused to give the brothers clothes worth a hundred ducats for their flight.

CHAPTER XVII

PIERO'S EXILE AND DEATH (1494-1503)

CHARLES made his entry into Florence towards dusk, almost extinguished by his huge white hat, clad in a blue cloak, on a great black charger, with lance in rest as a conqueror, under a canopy of cloth of gold. The splendid military pageant was headed by the two Medici cousins and a hundred young Florentines, dressed in the French style, who had ridden out to escort the King when he was presented with the keys of the city. The renegades Lorenzo and Giovanni now changed their name to Popolano and substituted the red cross on a white ground of the Guelfs for the usual Medici balls. Charles was welcomed with enthusiastic cries of "Francia, Francia," though his insignificant appearance was a sad disappointment.

Piero's wife Alfonsina was in Florence and, with her mother, she lost no time in appealing to the king, promising that, if Piero were restored, "he would govern with the French". Piero would undoubtedly have been better advised, and also have shown more spirit, had he taken refuge once again in the French camp, for Charles, as a ruler, felt for him and promised to restore him. The Medici were favoured by the Bishop of S. Malò (Brigonnet) and Charles, easily influenced, soon came round to his view, as he let the Florentines see, with the result that relations became strained. It is said that, when he approached Piero about returning, he stupidly consulted his hosts. The Venetians, who had no desire to see a strong rule in Florence under French protection,

dissuaded him, warning him not to trust the king ; they even talked of restoring him themselves.

We need not linger over Charles's eleven far from peaceful days in the city. When the Florentines would not submit to his exorbitant demands, he exclaimed, "Then we will sound our trumpets." "And we our bells", answered Piero Capponi, snatching the paper from the king's secretary and starting to leave the room. The king, who had no desire to engage his army in the tortuous alleys of Florence, with ready presence of mind, called after him, for he had known him in France, and exclaimed, smiling graciously, with one of his pet puns, "*Chappon, Chappon, vous êtes un mauvais Chapon*", whereupon negotiations were successfully concluded. The Florentines still pronounce the hard C almost as an H.

Piero was, by decree, ordered not to come within 200 miles of Florence, the cardinal not within 100. Alfonsina was allowed to keep her dowry and to remain in the city with her family.

In 1494 died two of Lorenzo's most intimate friends, Politian and Pico della Mirandola. Politian, who probably felt his patron's death as much as anyone, is said to have died in delirium, like a true humanist, reciting a poem he had written in praise of the beauty of a boy pupil. Parenti assures us that he died amid all the infamy and obloquy it is possible for a man to suffer, adding that this was largely due to the changed attitude of the volatile Florentines towards the Medici, but also to his own faults. Piero had tried to induce Alexander VI to give him a red hat. Yet Politian had followed the fashion and come under the spell of Savonarola, asking to be buried in the Dominican habit. He lies in S. Marco, as does Pico, who died, as prophesied, in the time of the lilies, on the very day when the French entered Florence. He had fallen more and more under Savonarola's influence and had long talked of entering the order, but delayed till



Piero the Unfortunate, by Botticelli
Uffizi, Florence

Audemar Photo

it was too late. Savonarola doubted his salvation, since he had refused to listen to the voice of the Lord, as embodied, of course, in himself. Then he had a vision of his being wafted upwards by angels and, with the unattractive mixture of pride and vanity that was growing upon him, he solemnly announced from the pulpit that Piero was safe in Purgatory. Marsilio Ficino lived till 1499.

The Florentines, who were smarting at the part played by Charles in the revolt of Pisa, were anything but pleased at the ease with which, as Savonarola had prophesied, he had marched through Italy and conquered Naples. Piero had now joined him and there were strong influences at work in favour of his restoration. He had written to justify himself with the Signoria, begging to be allowed to return. They answered that they had treated him with clemency for the sake of the king and had pushed their generosity to its furthest limits. When Charles was forced to abandon Naples, owing to the league which Ludovico Sforza so brilliantly engineered to cut off his retreat, Piero accompanied him and was boasting that he would be restored to power stronger than ever, thanks to the Orsini and various members of the king's suite, whose irresponsible promises he seems to have taken at face value. Florence, however, was determined not to submit to Piero's "pestiferous tyranny" or to listen to a word in his favour. When the king suggested to the envoys who had been sent to request him to restore to them what he had taken on condition that they did not join the league, that the Medici might be permitted to live in Tuscany as private citizens, they refused to consider the idea, saying they would turn upon him rather than submit. Ultimately Piero was packed off to Lucca, so as not to violate Florentine territory.

It was now that Commines had his interview with Savonarola, who told him that the king would return in safety, but with difficulty, and would be punished

for not reforming the Church and for plundering the poor—all which things he relates in order that it may be understood that “all the said expedition was a mystery of God”. And Charles duly broke through the superior forces of the allies at Fornovo, but, in spite of his promises, Florence did not recover Pisa, as Savonarola had prophesied that she would, a fact which shook the faith of the Florentines in both the king and the friar.

Savonarola was now the virtual ruler of the city. To him men turned for everything. Even the new democratic constitution was largely of his devising. At first he had tried to keep out of politics, but circumstances and his own belief in his divine mission and prophetic powers proved too strong for him. There was, however, still a powerful Medici party in Florence, the members of which nominally supported the new government, the Bigi, or Greys, as they were called, though they were far from satisfied with the prevailing state of affairs. They were in close touch with Piero. There were also the Arrabbiati, the old aristocrats, who had joined in the expulsion of the Medici in the belief that they would succeed to their power and who hated the Piagnoni, as they dubbed Savonarola's followers, and the popular government at least as much as they did the Medici. The Bigi were more their enemies than the Piagnoni, for they knew that there would be no mercy for them if the Medici returned.

The allies had a grudge against Florence, since, thanks largely to Savonarola, she remained loyal to France. If Ludovico Sforza favoured the Arrabbiati, Venice and the Pope were more practical in trying to promote a Medici restoration.

The Medici brothers had taken refuge in Rome with their Orsini kinsmen. Savonarola's unceasing denunciation of corruption in the Church and his defiance of Papal authority were gradually leading to a breach, which Alexander VI was anxious, if possible, to avoid.

The moment seemed favourable for their endeavouring to effect their return to Florence and in 1495 they made their first attempt. Virginio Orsini, a capable condottiere, was given the command. Piero and Giovanni were almost penniless, but, by straining their credit to the utmost, they succeeded in raising 10,000 ducats. The Pope did not oppose them and the Venetians actually advanced them a small sum. Alfonsina, meanwhile, had fled to Siena disguised as a nun. Lucrezia Salviati, strong-willed and dominating, stayed in Florence : when questioned by the authorities, she said that it was only natural that she should desire the return of her brothers and, to do her justice, she continued to work steadily for it. The invaders advanced through the Sienese to Perugia, where Piero waited for the troops which Giuliano was to bring from Bologna and the Romagna. But Savonarola had roused Florence to resistance from the pulpit, while men were called back from the army that was besieging Pisa. Piero had counted more on a rising in the city than on an external force, but his friends dared not move. Not only did no help come from Bologna, but Bentivoglio, afraid of offending Florence, dismissed Giuliano and the cardinal from his court. Funds were exhausted, Orsini accepted service with the French who were evacuating Naples and Piero had to return ignominiously to Rome.

Few misfortunes have a more demoralizing effect than exile, especially exile in straitened circumstances. Only the noblest spirits escape its baleful influence and Piero was far from being one of them. Guicciardini describes him as proud and brutal, desiring to be feared rather than loved—he had had his hand in more than one fatal night brawl—entirely lacking in the seriousness essential to his position, stupid, pig-headed and steadily refusing to take advice. Though men would have spoken differently had he succeeded in keeping his position, it is clear that such a man was bound to be expelled from Florence.

Lamberto dell'Antella, who had left his service in disgust at the treatment he had received, has described him for us. Though the picture may be over-coloured from resentment, it is obviously truthful in its main lines.

If Florence wishes to be sure of her independence, says Antella, the best thing she can do is to see that Piero lives, since, sooner or later, the brothers must quarrel. Piero insists on being master, paying not the slightest attention to the placid, easy-going cardinal, contradicting everything he says and treating him worse than a servant. Even if they do not quarrel, Piero's extravagance will be their ruin, since he insists on having a share of all the cardinal's money. If Giovanni died, as he might well do, for he was not strong, Piero would die of starvation, unless the Orsini came to the rescue. The brothers had long ago pawned all their silver and jewels and were heavily in debt.

Piero's way of life was as follows. He rose punctually at dinner-time and asked what there was to eat. If he did not like it, he would go round to the Sanseverino—Alfonsina's mother was a Sanseverino—who kept an excellent table, for he was a great glutton and few men could out-drink him. Afterwards he would shut himself up there with a prostitute, or even a boy, and there he would amuse himself for the rest of the day, especially if there was play and he had money; and there he would sup. At night he would go roistering about Rome with some kindred spirits as penniless as himself, eating, drinking, gambling and visiting courtesans of the baser sort. He would return to Alfonsina, whom he utterly neglected, a little before dawn. He was, says Antella, the most ungrateful man in the whole of Italy, treating old family servants like dogs. One of these, who had done him endless services, offended him and was turned out and Antella was asked more than once to have him murdered.

To Florence Piero had a sentimental attachment which finds genuine expression in a poem, by no means bad, that has survived, and had he stayed there, he would not have gone downhill to the same extent. Aristocratic Rome was far more corrupt than bourgeois Florence and he was merely doing as his Roman kinsmen did—Franceschetto Cibo, for example, or the Orsini, rough soldiers, who remained true to the traditions of the days when their existence was one unending feud with rival families. They were quite untouched by the refining influences which make the Renaissance for us and which in Rome were largely confined to the Papal court.

Of one thing Piero was determined. He would be restored only by force and as an absolute ruler, supported by a strong army. The feudal atmosphere of Rome, combined with the bitterness of exile, fostered his pride : as exiles will, he talked perpetually of his return. Even Giovanni could say that the executions after the Pazzi conspiracy and the banishments and imprisonments after the return of Cosimo in 1434 would be as nothing to those which would follow their return, for they were determined not to go on their travels again. They meant to confiscate the property of their cousins. Once, when the cardinal and Alfonsina were present, someone said to Piero, " You will come back to Florence and set up a splendid state and rule it with an experienced council of twenty-five or thirty citizens," he answered with a vulgar, contemptuous gesture, " You will clearly understand that I will take advice from no one." Possibly the tone of the speaker deserved such a reply.

Savonarola's moral influence over many of the best men of his day was as strong as ever. Of the artists there were Botticelli, Lorenzo di Credi and the Della Robbias, as well as Michelangelo, who never forgot and often re-read the sermons he had heard in his youth. But the lengths to which he was pushing his puritanical reforms inevitably led to a reaction. He

was endeavouring to set up a religion and a morality which had no roots in the world around him. The authority which he gave the children, thus anticipating the Bolsheviks, over their elders produced excesses almost as dangerous as those which he was endeavouring with their aid to repress. The diplomatic corps was not favourably impressed. Trinchedini wrote to Milan that this inept government was dragging Florence into the abyss and a Venetian wrote that, under the absolute rule of the friar, things were going badly ; plague, famine and discord between the commonalty and the nobles.

Yet it was Savonarola who saved the Medici library in 1498, when he was busiest burning vanities. It had been placed in S. Marco as pledge for 2,000 ducats owed by the State and there was danger of the books having to be sold, when Savonarola intervened and offered to raise the 1,000 ducats for which Philippe de Commines was clamouring.

With the prevalent discontent and the famine the Medici party was watching its chance, and when in 1497 Bernardo del Nero was Gonfalonier Piero made his second Putsch. The Pope was delighted, hoping for the fall of Savonarola, Ludovico Sforza was encouraging and the Palleschi, who spread it abroad that he was bringing bread, said that the whole city would rise. But he did not reach Siena till Bernardo's term of office was nearly over and Bernardo himself urged him to abandon the attempt. His force advanced rapidly, hoping to make its way into the city when the gates were opened in the morning, but a peasant had given the alarm. The gates were shut, the walls manned and, after waiting the whole day for the promised rising, Piero once more returned to Rome. The Pope told the Florentine ambassador that it was what he had expected of Piero. Now it was that Antella was arrested and the whole plot revealed. Bernardo del Nero, a Pucci, a Tornabuoni, Niccolò Ridolfi, the father-in-law of Contessina dei Medici,

and Giovanni Cambi were executed. Fra Mariano da Gennazzano escaped to Rome, where he used all his influence against Savonarola. To the next year belong Piero's last Putsch and Savonarola's death.

In 1496 the Florentine government had wisely sent the handsome, winning Giovanni dei Medici (Popolano) as ambassador to Caterina Sforza, who, since her husband's murder, was ruling Imola and Forlì for her son. She appears to have fallen to his charm at once and her uncle, Ludovico Sforza, was soon informed that she would marry him "to satisfy her appetite". Venice and Milan protested, but in vain, for they had no wish to see her weight thrown into the scale of Florence. The marriage had to be kept secret, or she would have forfeited her guardianship. In 1498 she gave birth to a son, afterwards famous as Giovanni delle Bande Nere, who was to be the father of Cosimo, the first Grand Duke of Florence. Giovanni, a Sforza through and through, a worthy descendant of his two great condottiere ancestors, was her youngest child, the only one who had inherited her fighting spirit, and she doted on him. Not that she spoiled him, for she was the only human being who could keep him in order. Towards the end of the year her husband, Giovanni, died, and she insisted that the boy, who had been christened Ludovico after the Duke of Milan, should be called Giovanni.

The Cardinal S. Maria in Domnica was not happy in Rome, where he was bullied by his brother and frowned upon by the Pope, so he obtained leave to travel and see something of the world. With him went his cousin Giulio, Knight of Rhodes and Prior of Capua, and his bosom friend, Bernardo Dovizi (Bibbiena) and nine other kindred spirits. At Venice, where Sanuto describes him as "a big man, but ugly and short-sighted, a coarse man", he dressed as a simple priest; later, the whole party travelled as merchants. Each evening they chose one of their number to act as leader for the next day. They went

to Ratisbon and Ulm, where they were recognized and summoned to the presence of the Emperor Maximilian, who was impressed with their enterprise and congratulated Giovanni upon the use he made of his time. Then they went down the Rhine to the Low Countries, where they were received most courteously by Maximilian's son, Philippe le Bel, at Brussels. The cardinal wanted to cross to England, but the majority were afraid of the sea and refused. At Rouen they were arrested, and though Giovanni revealed his identity, they were not released till they received a letter from Louis XII, under whom Piero was serving at Milan; the war with Naples made Italians suspect in France. From Marseilles they sailed to Genoa near by; in his native town of Savona they found Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, afterwards Julius II, who refused to live in Rome under the hated Borgia. Thus three future Popes—for Giulio was to be Clement VII—foregathered in the little Ligurian seaport. Giovanni then spent some time in Genoa with his sister, Maddalena Cibo, her husband having left Pisa for his native town. He was back in Rome in May, 1500. Louis XII had meanwhile captured Milan and Cesare Borgia was busy building up his duchy in the Romagna, whence Caterina Sforza, his first victim, had been taken a prisoner to Rome.

Giovanni, now twenty-five, was henceforth treated with all courtesy by the Pope. Circumstances seemed once more to offer the Medici a chance. Louis had begun by helping the Florentines against Pisa, but they soon disgusted him and there was much discontent in Tuscany. Egged on by Venice and the Orsini, the brothers determined once again to try their luck. Giovanni joined Cesare Borgia after he had captured Faenza and suggested that he should reinstate the Medici as he marched through Tuscany towards Piombino. Giuliano also came to the French camp from Urbino, undertaking that Florence would help Louis in every possible way in his proposed expedition

against Naples. Piero, too, was somewhere in the wake of the Borgia, but Cesare had no intention of complicating his position by quixotic expeditions on behalf of the Medici and refused to admit him into his presence.

So Piero joined the French army against Naples. On December 28th, 1503, Gonsalvo de Cordova, El Gran Capitán, utterly defeated them at the Garigliano. Piero, who had fought well in the battle, went on board a boat which was to convey four guns to Gaeta to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy with a number of other fugitives : it was heavily overloaded and sank. His body was not found for several days. He was buried in his brother's abbey of Montecassino, which is not far from the Garigliano. There were few who regretted him.

CHAPTER XVIII

CARDINAL GIOVANNI DEI MEDICI (1503-13)

By the death of Piero, Giovanni became the head of the House and his fortunes soon began to improve. He had been one of the poorest of the cardinals. In 1500 he had an income of only 6,000 ducats compared with the 20,000 of Giuliano della Rovere and the 30,000 of Ascanio Sforza. Moreover, Piero had been a perpetual drain on his purse. He was heavily in debt and the table silver often found its way to the butcher or the baker who supplied food for the dinners he liked to give. Not that debt or lack of money troubled him, for he had the curious belief in his star that characterizes some men who are fated to rise to a great position.

His good temper and kindness, his Medici tact and charm had made him very popular in the Sacred College, especially with the younger members, and the contrast in their characters endeared him to Julius II, who found him capable as well as easy to get on with. Medici had early settled at the Palazzo Lombardi, later the Palazzo Madama, now the Senate House, near the Pantheon. Belonging to the Orsini, it had formed part of Alfonsina's dowry and he had acquired it in exchange for the principality of Nepi, which he had procured for Piero. It was considered one of the most sumptuous palaces of the day, the door-frames of coloured marble then awaking universal admiration. It was, in fact, just the palace that Giovanni would choose. He was already recognized as one of the leading connoisseurs of Rome. Dealers in antiques and rare stuffs, artists and jewellers delighted to submit their wares to the young cardinal who thus carried on the Medici tradition, and

the palace was soon filled with a good collection, such as was then fashionable. Here, too, Medici built up a worthy library, to which, in 1508, he added, at the cost of 2,652 ducats, the Medici books which had, thanks to Savonarola, been preserved in S. Marco.

And here he already began to gather round him the leading scholars and men of letters. Probably he had developed slowly, for, though never a scholar, he now talked Latin fluently and with real eloquence : moreover, we are told that he liked to discourse on serious subjects with ecclesiastics who were recognized authorities upon them. If he hunted, like his friends, he also indulged to the full his passion for music. He had an instrument in his bedroom for composing and from morning to night his palace resounded to the strains of music and song, in which he often took part himself. As his fortunes mended he was not only able to extend his patronage, but to entertain sumptuously. With such a variety of expensive tastes it is not surprising that his expenditure continued to keep well ahead of his income, in spite of the efforts of the more prudent Giulio, who controlled his household and who was possessed of a turn for economy which betrayed his origin.

Now, too, Giovanni began to form the friendships that were to last his lifetime. Chief among these, after Giulio, was the versatile, brilliant, ever-popular Bernardo Dovizi, known as Bibbiena from his birthplace. Steeped in the culture of the day, he was the intimate friend of Bembo and Castiglione and Raphael, who drew the sketches for the story of Cupid and Venus with which, when cardinal, he scandalized Rome by decorating his bathroom in the Vatican. Bembo hardly exaggerates when he says, "Everybody likes him, everybody respects him, everybody confides in him, everybody has a good word to say for him." If there is a distinct touch of the fox in the smiling, mocking, but not unkindly face that looks out from Raphael's portrait, a vulpine

streak, as Machiavelli warns us, was almost essential for success in Cinquecento Italy, even for the strongest. Bibbiena was already Giovanni's right-hand man and general factotum. He was also a noted wit and practical joker, "a past master in leading on grave and serious men to madness". It was Bibbiena whom the Signora Emilia chose to describe the kind of jokes that are becoming to the perfect courtier in the *Cortegiano*, not merely because all knew how amusingly he could talk, but because it was a subject upon which he contemplated writing; and his exposition helps us to understand Leo's taste in such matters. It was at Urbino that his comedy, *Calandria*, was first performed, with a prologue by Castiglione.

If not an intimate of the court of Urbino, like his brother Giuliano, to whom it was a second home, Giovanni visited it more than once and not a few other men who were to rise to prominence during his papacy appear in Castiglione's famous dialogue, which he places at Urbino in the year 1507. Here Giovanni met Pietro Bembo, who spent the happiest years of his life in the little court on the slopes of the Apennines, "where might be heard pleasant discourse and seemly jest and on the faces of all could be seen depicted a cheerful joyousness, so that this palace might well be called the home of mirth". The utmost importance was wisely attached to cheerfulness during the Renaissance as a means of preserving health. Filippo Beroaldo, later a librarian of the Vatican under Leo, looked back wistfully on the easy, intimate life at Urbino, while Bernardo Accolti—L'Unico Aretino as, with characteristic vanity, the famous improvvisatore called himself—also plays his part in the *Cortegiano*. The Magnifico Giuliano appears there as an authority on music and the French court and to him, well known for his passionate, not to say scandalous, devotion to the fair sex, is assigned the task of describing the perfect court lady. For Baldassare Castiglione himself Giovanni had a genuine affection

and admiration, saying in later days that he had never been in his company without learning something, or read his works without admiring their grace and scholarship.

In Rome Giovanni showed characteristic prudence in his choice of friends. First of these was the Pope's favourite nephew, a son of his sister, Galeotto della Rovere, as he was called. On his election Julius gave him his own red hat as cardinal of S. Pietro in Vincula and, on the death of Ascanio Sforza, the great and wealthy office of Vice-Chancellor of the Church. Handsome, engaging and cultivated, Galeotto was a universal favourite, living with a magnificence that was then expected of a wealthy young cardinal of position. If he was a noted collector of antiques, he kept the best racing-stable probably ever owned by a member of the Sacred College. Medici had first sought his company with the deliberate object of pushing his fortunes, and undoubtedly the intimacy helped him not a little with Julius, but he ended by becoming sincerely attached to the young Vice-Chancellor and the attachment was mutual; indeed, in a fit of boyish enthusiasm, Galeotto once undertook that Medici should be the next Pope. Medici was not, as a rule, a man of much feeling, but the early death of this friend was a real grief to him; even when Pope it is said that he could not conceal his emotion when his name was mentioned.

Under Julius the great nobles had been at last reduced to a state of due subordination. They played little part in the social life of the capital, their places being largely taken by the wealthy cardinals and the great bankers, all foreigners, mostly Genoese and Florentines. Few of the old Roman families could compete with them, either in wealth or culture. The ever-empty coffers of the Popes and the poorer cardinals gave these financiers their power. The most important, the Cosimo dei Medici of his day, was the Sienese millionaire, largely a self-made man,

Agostino Chigi, with his reddish hair and great hooked nose, whose purse even a good man of business like Julius was glad to have behind him. He was once compelled to pledge his best tiara to him. It was Julius, ever anxious to encourage the erection of handsome buildings in a district he was trying to develop, who egged him on to make the Farnesina what it became by telling him that Riario would eclipse him with his magnificent palace, later called the Cancelleria. Chigi guaranteed that his stables should be larger than Riario's dining room and he kept his word. In this "dwelling fit for Paradise" Chigi gathered his great collection of antiques, ranging them round the garden, which has now disappeared, after the fashion of the day. New ones were continually coming to light in the rapid transformation of the city and his wealth generally enabled him to outbid rivals. The most famous find of the time was the Laocoön, unearthed in the Baths of Titus in 1506. It caused the greatest excitement among all classes and inspired Sadoletto to write the Latin poem which made his reputation. The Apollo Belvedere was also found in the days of Julius.

Chigi derived much of his wealth from his farming of the Tolfa alum mines, the salt works in the Pope's dominions and the tolls at Porto Ercole. He had done considerable business with the kingdom of Naples and had been courted by the Aragonese kings. His crest and motto—the craze for crests and mottoes had come to Italy with the army of Charles VIII—was a sheaf of arrows with *dardos*.¹ In later days Chigi employed 20,000 men and had 100 branches in Italy, as well as agencies stretching from London to Constantinople. The Grand Turk called him the great merchant of the Christians and gave him a magnificent Arab. He himself owned a famous breed of horses, which he would lend to the cardinals. When it was not to his interest to be lenient, he could be a merciless

¹ Spanish for arrows; also *dar dos*, give twice.

creditor. Naturally, such a man despised gambling as the worst of vices. He advanced Piero dei Medici money, taking valuable stuffs of his as a pledge. Giovanni early became intimate with him and also dipped into his coffers.

These were the great days of the Roman courtesan. Imperia, the most famous of them, queened it under Julius II in her magnificent apartment in the Banchi, the most fashionable street in Rome, where Chigi had his offices. The best of the class, the *cortegiana onesta*, was then far more cultivated than the Roman lady and provided the usual female society for the cardinals, who found it almost impossible to get any other in a city where the great ladies hardly ever left their palaces. Men spent fortunes on these beauties. Bandello, the novelist, describes Imperia as housed and served like a princess, her rooms hung with costly velvets and brocades, the most precious of carpets (a great luxury) on the floor. In her boudoir, where she received her more distinguished visitors, the hangings were of finely worked cloth of gold. The console, gold and blue, was loaded with vases of alabaster and other rare substances. On the centre table, covered with green velvet, would be a lute or other instrument, with handsomely bound music books or volumes in Italian or Latin : for she was fond of poetry, having been well coached by an admirer, and could turn a sonnet or a madrigal, just as she could play and sing and dance—all necessary accomplishments for one who would make a mark in her profession. In her apartment gathered the ablest and wealthiest of the young cardinals, Medici among them, as well as the leading scholars, Paolo Giovio, Beroaldo, the saintly Sadoletto, who gave her jewels, and Inghirami, the Vatican librarian.

Tommaso Inghirami had been brought to Florence at the age of two from Volterra, where his father had perished in the sack, and educated by Lorenzo in his family. He was known as Fedra, so well had he once

played the part in Seneca's *Hippolytus*, improvising verses when something went wrong with the scenery. He is said to have been jealous of Sadolet's success with Imperia. Chigi, who was very intimate with her, financed her generously. He was her executor and he is credited with the paternity of her daughter, Lucrezia, whose virtue was to rival that of her Roman namesake. She had married a Sienese merchant and when the handsome young cardinal Petrucci, a member of the ruling house of Siena, imprisoned him on a trumped-up charge and sent for her, rather than yield to him she took poison. Fortunately she was found in time and recovered.

Unlike most of these ladies, Imperia, possibly because she lived to be only thirty-one, died still wealthy and respected, in the heyday of her success, in 1511, and was buried in S. Gregorio with the inscription : "Imperia, Roman courtesan, who was worthy of that great name, being endowed with matchless beauty."

After the death of his brother Giovanni laid himself out to conciliate the Florentines in every way. His house and all that he possessed were placed at their disposal and he made it plain that Piero's violent ways were not his. Even the enemies of the Medici turned to him for help. He was almost a second Florentine ambassador in Rome, for he was careful never to do anything against the existing government. On the feast of SS. Cosimo and Damiano, the Medici day (September 27th), he gave a great banquet : thus in 1504 he is said to have entertained seven-eighths of the Florentines in Rome, the guests being received by Giuliano. But in 1508 there was trouble when a marriage was arranged between Piero's daughter, Clarice, and the wealthy young Filippo Strozzi. Giuliano had worked hard for a match between her and his friend Baldassare Castiglione, but Lucrezia Salviati pointed out to her brother, Giovanni, the advantages of such an alliance for the Medici and the

match was broken off. A serious view was taken of the marriage in Florence, which was thought to portend a return of the Medici. Filippo was fined 300 ducats and confined to Naples for three years—no hardship in his case—while the old penalties against the Medici were re-enacted.

Not that Giovanni was destined to lead a life of cultured ease under the soldier Pope. He was one of the cardinals who accompanied him on his expedition to bring Perugia and Bologna under the control of the Church. Nothing could daunt Julius, who started at dawn to escape the August heat and fearlessly entered Perugia with such a small escort that Baglioni might easily have killed him, as Machiavelli thought he should have done. The more luxurious cardinals were far from happy among the mosquitoes and other discomforts of the campaign. This was the occasion when Giovanni Bentivoglio rivalled Piero, whom he had scorned for his want of courage, in his headlong flight from Bologna.

The utter defeat of Venice by the League of Cambrai, of which the Pope was the heart and soul, and the Pope's change of sides in order to prevent the French from becoming too powerful, lie outside this book. More important for us is the capture of Bologna by the French and the expulsion of the legate, the Pope's favourite, Cardinal Alidosi, who had made himself bitterly hated. Francesco Maria della Rovere, the Pope's nephew, commanded the troops, and, though Alidosi was most to blame, the Duke was summoned to Ravenna and soundly rated by his infuriated uncle. On his way back the angry Duke met Alidosi, who was going to the Pope. When he greeted him with a mocking smile, della Rovere ran him through with his sword. For the moment the Pope was prostrated with grief, but recovered with characteristic rapidity and was soon denouncing the villainies of the late cardinal. Medici was one of the commission appointed to enquire into the matter. Five months

later the Duke was forgiven and restored to all the offices of which his violent old uncle had deprived him.

By 1511 the Pope was turning all his energies against France, since Louis XII was behind the rebel cardinals who had summoned him to appear before the schismatic Council of Pisa. Florence was, as usual, loyal to France, but, against the advice of the Gonfalonier for life, Piero Soderini, she remained neutral when the Pope organized the Holy League which was joined by Ferdinand of Aragon, Venice and Henry VIII, for his protection. Medici was sent as legate with the army, under Raimondo de Cardona, Viceroy of Naples, which was to attempt to recover Bologna, where the Bentivogli were supported by the French under Lautrec. In vain did he urge Cardona to attack. Gaston de Foix now makes his dramatic appearance upon the scene. Heedless of the complaints of his men, this brilliant young general of twenty-two, a nephew of Louis XII, crossed the Apennines in spite of the snow and the violent storms and slipped into Bologna before he was known to be in the neighbourhood. After raising the siege, he pounced upon Brescia which had revolted and delivered it up to his men, who sacked it with a fury that was long remembered. Then, urged by his king, who realized that a decisive victory alone could save the French, he advanced upon Ravenna. Cardona had no wish to risk a battle, but was forced to relieve it and on April 11th, Easter Day and also St Leo's Day, 1512, the two armies met between the city and the sea. The hard-fought struggle has often been described. The French were victorious, but Gaston led a cavalry charge against the splendid Spanish infantry that was stubbornly retreating at the very end of the day and was killed.

The Legate, who had absolved the army before the battle, was on the field in his robes, encouraging the men and ministering to the wounded and dying. With many others he was captured. Conspicuous in

the French army with his glittering armour and fighting like a soldier was the gigantic Cardinal Sanseverino, brother and son of condottieri of note, who was the legate of the schismatic Council of Pisa. Medici was given into his keeping. His cousin Giulio had escaped. Sanseverino, who naturally treated his fellow cardinal prisoner with every consideration, readily gave permission for Giulio to visit him ; and it was Giulio who brought accurate news to the Pope.

In Bologna Medici was kindly treated by the old friends of his family, the Bentivogli. Thence he was transferred to Milan. On his way through Modena Bianca Rangone, another Bentivoglio, gave him her most valuable jewels to supply his needs. When he became Pope he showed his gratitude by making one of her sons a cardinal and finding good military posts for the others. In Milan Medici was lodged in Sanseverino's house. The schismatic Council had now been transferred to Milan, where it was anything but popular, Cardinal Carvajal being mockingly saluted as Pope. Here Giulio brought his cousin full powers from Rome to absolve those who had incurred excommunication by fighting against the Pope, on condition that they did not repeat the offence. By this move Medici was able to serve the Pope to better purpose as a prisoner than as a free man. So great were the crowds that came to receive absolution that the schismatics were completely put out of countenance, but the French penitents, with their well-known devoutness, were too numerous for them to venture to protest.

The death of Gaston de Foix with many other distinguished French soldiers made Ravenna a Pyrrhic victory. Lautrec soon had to abandon Milan. With him went the schismatic cardinals and their prisoner, Cardinal Medici, as Louis had ordered. When they reached the Po, Medici, possibly feigning illness, was allowed to sleep in the parsonage of a remote village. An old soldier, who had great respect for the Medici,

and particularly for Lorenzo, collected a small body of troops with the intention of effecting his rescue. The cardinal, who was one of the last to reach the river on his mule, turned back when a disturbance arose. His rescuers gathered round him and got him away without much trouble. The owner of the castle whither he was taken was of French sympathies and shut him up in his pigeon-house till he could consult Trivulzio. Doubtless the heavy, ease-loving cardinal accepted the discomforts of his lodging with the resignation, or the indifference, which is often so surprising in the Renaissance. Loyal though he was to France, the distinguished soldier of Milan, Trivulzio, recommended that the cardinal should be released, since his detention could serve no useful purpose now that the French were being driven from Italy. So Medici went to Mantua.

He was soon back in Bologna as legate. The Pope was determined to punish Florence. The virtuous, but incompetent, Soderini, whom Machiavelli consigned to Limbo in a posthumous epigram, despatched his equally incompetent and upright brother to Mantua, where the Congress had assembled which was to clear up the aftermath of the war. Had he been willing to bribe the penniless Spaniard Cardona, the fate of Florence might conceivably have been different, though the implacable Pope, who had not forgiven Florence for the Council of Pisa, and the astute Medici cardinal, would have proved formidable obstacles, for Giovanni spared no pains to secure the great ambition of his life, the return of his family to Florence. Giuliano was also there, lavishing promises, in case of success, and with 10,000 ducats for the Spaniards.

Soderini was a hopeless nonentity, being left completely in the dark. No one in Florence dreamt of the return of the Medici, for the Pope and the Spaniards had been careful to lull the city into a state of security. When Florence awoke to the true state of affairs, Cardona was at Barberino, in the Mugello,

the home of Lorenzo's Nencia, with the Medici brothers and Giulio and the young Lorenzo, son of Piero. Their only artillery consisted of two guns which the cardinal had brought from Bologna. In spite of the Pope's orders the Duke of Urbino refused to let him have any of his artillery or to permit Medici's Orsini relatives to join the expedition, a refusal which may have counted against him on a later occasion.

Cardona announced that he was going to depose Soderini and restore the Medici as private citizens : the needy Spaniard also demanded a heavy subsidy. Not only did Soderini refuse this, but he declined even to provide rations for the army, actually believing that by so doing he would force it to retreat. Instead, the Spaniards advanced to Prato. So desperate was Cardona's condition that he offered to withdraw, if Florence would recall the Medici and give him 30,000 ducats and 100 loads of bread. As usual Soderini hesitated. In spite of his lack of artillery, Cardona managed to get into Prato. The citizen militia, which was now the master-passion of Machiavelli's life as the one hope of saving Italy from the foreigner, proved utterly worthless and the Spaniards sacked the town with a fury which was a new experience to the unwarlike Cinquecento Tuscan. The pro-Medici chroniclers speak of the cardinal intervening to save the women, but all the evidence goes to show that, if he did so, he had very little success. His letter to the Pope makes no such claims. He admits that the sack had made a painful impression, but thinks that its very frightfulness will prove salutary. Did he remember the splendid welcome Prato had given him when he entered the town as its boy bishop ?

The fate of Florence was sealed. Outside were the Spaniards, inside the Medici party, busily intriguing, none more effectively than Lucrezia Salviati. Soderini was escorted to Siena, whence he fled to Ragusa and then to the Turks, fearing the long arm of the implacable Pope. On September 1st, 1512, Giuliano

re-entered his native city in triumph amid enthusiastic cries of "Palle! Palle!" He struck the true Medici note, declaring that he came as a simple citizen; also, he shaved his French beard and donned the red Florentine *lucco*. The cardinal received the envoys sent him with great cordiality. All the Medici asked, he told them, was to be accepted as simple citizens and allowed to buy back their confiscated property. But there were still the Spaniards. In spite of the modest demands of the Medici, Florence ended by having to pay 180,000 ducats and to engage 150 Spanish men-at-arms.

The cardinal was given an equally cordial welcome when he returned to his palace escorted by a large body of troops. It was at once apparent that he was the head of the family and the real ruler of Florence. A parliament was summoned and a *balia* appointed, through which the Medici ruled. The cardinal behaved with a moderation which was as much a part of his character as of his policy, and which had not a little to do with his success in life, for it was a rare quality in the Cinquecento. At least Piero had taught him what to avoid. On the whole the Florentines were not sorry to have the family back again. Every effort was made to revive the gaiety of Lorenzo's early years. No one entered more whole-heartedly into this side of life than Giovanni. He remained a Florentine of the Florentines to the end of his days in his enjoyment of every kind of festivity and amusement, including the schoolboy practical jokes and buffoonery then popular.

Fra Mariano Fetti was already more or less in his service. This curious character, who became the most famous buffoon and clown of his day, had been Lorenzo's barber, brought up amid *i divini suoi costumi*, as Pietro Aretino, who seems really to have loved him, puts it. A barber, it must be remembered, was also a surgeon and doctor. Then he had fallen under the influence of Savonarola, becoming a Dominican

lay brother in S. Marco. Finally, he followed the exiled Medici to Rome, where he was a familiar and welcome figure in learned and ecclesiastical society. The cardinal now sent for him and for Bibbiena, who was unrivalled in organizing any kind of frolic, to liven up the city in true Florentine style. The fooling of the absurd poet Baraballo, which was to be carried much further in Rome, was now begun in Florence, ■ Fra Mariano mentions in a letter to the Marquis of Mantua. Two clubs were founded among the gilded youth of the city, one headed by Giuliano, with the Medici device of the diamond ring and the red, white and green feathers, the other by Lorenzo with Piero's device of the blazing torch. The cardinal's device was as appropriate as the motto, a yoke with the word *suave*, light. For the people there were the joyous feast days and the carnival, with the *trionfi*, the cars and the songs; and if new ones were written by Nardi, the chronicler, to suit the changed times, Lorenzo's "Quant' è bella giovinezza" once again echoed down the streets of Florence as of old.

All, however, was not to go smoothly. In February, 1513, Boscoli and Capponi were executed after confessing that, though they had formed no conspiracy, they had meant to free their country from the tyrant. They, too, were fired with a desire to imitate Brutus. It was Boscoli who, on learning his fate, turned to Della Robbia who was comforting him, with, "O Luca, get this Brutus out of my head, so that I may die a good Christian." Once again we are face to face with a facet of the burning question of the hour, the reconciliation of Christianity with classical antiquity, in a singularly crude form. Boscoli's confessor was much impressed by his behaviour during his last hours. It was now that Machiavelli was imprisoned and tortured because his name was on the list of possible fellow-conspirators drawn up by Boscoli and Capponi, the accidental dropping of which had betrayed them, but he was quickly released.

CHAPTER XIX

POPE LEO X. EARLY YEARS (1513-17)

THE lives of Boscoli and Capponi would very possibly have been spared by the conciliatory cardinal had he remained in Florence. But he was then on his way to Rome, for Julius II had died on February 20th. He travelled in a litter, on account of the troublesome fistula from which he suffered. He was the last cardinal to enter the Conclave, where a surgeon had to perform an operation on him. The Conclave rapidly resolved itself into a struggle between the older and the younger cardinals. The latter were better together because the hopes of attaining the Papacy which animated many of the older cardinals tended to break them up. Bibbiena, still a layman, was Medici's conclavist. With his popularity, his diplomatic skill, his knowledge of all the ins and outs of the Sacred College, he did yeoman service for his chief. It is he who is said to have spread the rumour that Medici could not possibly live long, thus materially increasing his chances, for, though but thirty-seven, he was now regarded as one of the older cardinals. It is even said that the stench from Medici's wound in the confined space had not a little to do with bringing the issue so quickly to a head. Bibbiena is also credited with the reconciliation of Medici with Soderini, which was vital to his success. Such was the effect it produced that when Raffaele Riario, who had been an enemy of the Medici since his imprisonment after the Pazzi conspiracy, realized that he had no chance, he carried his influence over to Medici, thus ensuring him the requisite number of votes. It was

for Medici, as senior cardinal deacon, to read out the names, a duty which he performed with a placid modesty that was characteristic.

As often, Medici's election represented a reaction from his predecessor. Tired of the fighting Julius, men looked to Medici to give them a quiet time. With his kindness and gentleness, his peaceable disposition, his blameless private life and lavish generosity, it was expected that he would inaugurate a new era. His birth and the standing of his family also helped him. The young cardinals were proud of their triumph. The election created surprise owing to the Pope's youth, but it was well received. As usual, guns were fired, bonfires lit and there was much rejoicing, especially among the Florentine merchants, who scattered cakes and money among the crowd and broached whole barrels of wine. Medici chose the name of Leo, though he was expected to behave "more like a gentle lamb than a raging lion". Was he thinking of the Florentine beast, the Marzocco, or of the battle of Ravenna, fought on the day of S. Leo? There is also the story that his mother, when pregnant with him, dreamt that she brought forth a large, but very gentle, lion. It is said that during the night after his election he was continually waking and asking his valet whether he was really Pope. As he was only in minor orders, he had to be quickly made a priest and a bishop. Thanks to the stern measures of Julius, the election had been untainted by simony and high hopes were placed on the new reign. Even Louis XII was pleased. At Florence there was wild rejoicing over the first Florentine Pope. Bonfires blazed for four days and the enemies of the Medici and the Piagnoni had a bad time.

At his coronation, when the cardinals, as usual, asked him a number of favours, these were so excessive —though nothing to what they would certainly have demanded in the old days of simony—that he bade them with a characteristic smile take his tiara

"and arrange among yourselves about the division as though you were Pope". If Leo could never resist a joke, he showed the sincerity of his religious feeling when he appeared in public in the draughty ruins of the old S. Peter's at Easter and actually washed and kissed the feet of the beggars, barefoot himself.

The *possesso*, the first great public ceremony of a new reign, when the Pope rode through the city to take official possession of the Lateran, was of a splendour that was prophetic and symbolical of the last great flowering of the Renaissance in Rome. It took place on April 11th, S. Leo's day and the date of the battle of Ravenna. Characteristic was the sending for the Duke of Ferrara who had fled from Rome to escape the angry Julius, so that he might play his part in the ceremony. He held the stirrup of the Pope when he mounted the white Arab that had carried him at the battle of Ravenna—here again he seemed to be exorcising the ill-luck of that day—under the usual canopy, wearing his richly jewelled tiara. He had redeemed this horse from his captors and saw that it was carefully looked after as long as it lived. Under the brilliant sunshine of the Roman spring the streets were crowded with cheering crowds shouting, "Leone, Leone! Palle, Palle!" All along the Via Papale were silk hangings, rich tapestries and festoons of flowers, and at regular intervals stood the usual altars round which priests and monks were grouped. Newly excavated statues and valuable pictures were publicly displayed on these occasions. At the first triumphal arch, by the Ponte S. Angelo, stood Apollo playing his lyre cheek by jowl with Christ giving the keys to S. Peter, a not inappropriate symbol of the new reign. Round it ran a frieze of lions and diamond rings and feathers, while the Medici balls spouted water and wine. Inside the arch a picture of kings making peace while adoring the Pope and another of peoples embracing showed what was expected of the

new Pontiff. The Medici emblems were everywhere. At Chigi's arch in the Banchi were Apollo, Mercury and Minerva; above it, two nymphs surrounded by negro pages, one of whom recited verses as the Pope rode through. Round it was the inscription, referring to the three Popes Alexander, Julius and Leo,

Once Cypris held sway,
Then Mars had his way,
Now 'tis Pallas's day.

This owes its fame not a little to the inscription set up as a commentary upon it by Antonio da S. Marino, the famous goldsmith, with whom the Pope had long had dealings, over his shop in the Banchi: "Mars was, Pallas is, I Cypris shall always be." The Pope alone spent 10,000 ducats on the Possesso.

Pallas and peace were the keynotes of the decorations, and the Pope's first actions showed that he did not mean to disappoint expectations. Soderini was recalled and gratified by a marriage between his family and that of the Pope. Steps were also taken to bring the rebel cardinals back to the fold, though there was opposition to the move amongst their colleagues. One of the very first acts of the new Pontiff had been to appoint Jacopo Sadoleto and Pietro Bembo, the two best Latinists of the time, to be his secretaries. Nor were the Humanists altogether wrong in their prophecy that an age of iron was being succeeded by an age of gold, at least for the followers of Minerva.

In appearance Leo owed little more to Nature than his father. He was above the middle height and strongly built, but very fat and unhealthily puffy, with legs too thin for his weight. His neck was short and thick, his enormous head, with its flabby, pendulous cheeks, poked forward, his painfully short-sighted eyes were large and prominent. His one good point were his plump but shapely white hands, which were beautifully kept and loaded with richly-jewelled rings. In features he was like his mother. He was slow in all

his movements and talked little (*perpetua illa taciturnitas* — *prudentissima taciturnitas*), preferring to answer with nothing more definite than a smile. Indeed, he was always smiling or laughing, often hilariously, as the diary of his Master of Ceremonies, Paris de Grassis, makes abundantly clear. His face was singularly immobile. But, like Lorenzo, he was endowed with a charm which amply made up for these defects and which found expression in his pleasant, musical, high-pitched voice. This, like his look and gesture, he could vary to suit every occasion and person. His instinctive insight into character was almost unerring and enabled him to divine in a moment the object of his visitor. He knew only too well how to soften a refusal by his apparent distress at not being able to grant a request and by promises of future favours, so that those whom he sent empty away were hardly less gratified than the successful petitioner. When he granted a favour, says Paolo Giovio in his admirable life, "he would spread all the sails of his benignity and charm", increasing it by apologizing for not being able to do more in a case so deserving and instinctively playing upon his knowledge of the man with whom he was dealing. His easy good nature made him dislike to see people unhappy, but his habit of not fulfilling promises ended by piling up not a little ill-feeling against him.

In public he was possessed of a well-bred dignity of bearing which was altogether beyond the peasant Della Rovere and the "singular majesty" with which he officiated at ecclesiastical functions was long remembered. Indubitably pious, he conscientiously recited his office and heard Mass daily in the chapel of S. Lorenzo, which Fra Angelico had decorated. The oft-quoted remark, "How profitable to us and ours this Christ-myth has been is known to all" is altogether apocryphal; it appears first in a satire full of inaccuracies by a renegade Carmelite monk in the days of Queen Elizabeth. His bulk made him short

of breath and slow of movement and he found a long ceremony painfully trying, ceaselessly mopping the perspiration that poured from his face, neck and hands with a cloth. Yet even in church he could not resist the temptation to play the fool. Thus at the Feast of the Purification, when he had been Pope for five years, he made merry with the younger cardinals, giving some of them more candles, some less, and asking Paris de Grassis to find him two tiny ones for two of his priestly buffoons.

Leo at once proclaimed his desire to bring about general peace in Europe with a view to organizing a great Crusade. To us the idea may seem fantastic, but to thinking men of the Cinquecento, especially in Venice, the steady advance of the Turk was a source of well-justified anxiety. Unfortunately, since the invasion of Charles VIII nearly all the Italian states were more or less bound either to France or to Spain, which were tending more and more to fight out their long struggle for supremacy in the peninsula. And now Louis XII, who was anxious to invade Italy and recover Milan, won over Venice from the League. As in everything else, Leo was slow in making up his mind, but carefully calculated temporizing soon became one of his favourite diplomatic weapons. Though he had no wish to see the French in Italy, he refused to abandon his neutrality, even when the Emperor, Henry VIII and Ferdinand of Aragon urged him to join their new Holy League, concluded at Malines in April, 1513. However, when the French under Trivulzio were moving against Milan, he did consent to advance 42,000 ducats for the Swiss who were prepared to defend the Duchy, but he would not openly join the allies. These magnificent soldiers, entirely without cavalry or artillery, surprised the French army, which was well supplied with both, at Novara, and utterly defeated it, though it was three times as numerous, after a Titanic struggle. When the news reached Rome, Leo took no part in the

rejoicing and the crowd, mindful of his fighting predecessor, shouted "Julio! Julio!" ; but he was none the less delighted at the result.

The defeat of the French brought about the end of the schism. Leo was anxious to pardon the two rebel cardinals as soon as they had made submission. They had to appear before the Consistory dressed as simple priests. On his way thither it was noticed that the haughty Spaniard, Carvajal, was trembling like a leaf. Leo made them a long speech, pointing out the heinousness of their offence, and gave them a document to read containing a list of their misdeeds. Carvajal's voice was too unsteady for him to read it, whereupon Leo told him that, if he were unwilling to sign it, he might have a safe-conduct back to Florence. However, Sanseverino read it right through, and, after they had both signed it, they were robed like new cardinals. A reconciliation next followed with Louis XII, who admitted the errors of his ways.

The elegance and point with which the Pope replied to the envoys who came to congratulate him on his accession were much admired, by none more than by his Master of the Ceremonies, who was accustomed to Julius floundering hopelessly on such occasions. With his eager curiosity Leo took great interest in the voyages of discovery by which the Spaniards and Portuguese were opening up vast new territories. No embassy pleased him more than that from Portugal, headed by Tristan d'Acunha himself with three of his sons. It brought him Persian horses ridden by Persians, leopards, rare birds and the elephant which was said to be the first to be seen in Italy since the days of the Roman empire. A hippopotamus had perished in the struggle to get him on board ship. The silver howdah was turreted and filled with precious gifts. When Ammone reached the bridge he bent his knees three times to His Holiness, who was watching from the Castel S. Angelo, and delighted everyone, none more than the Pope, by squirting water over the

crowd. He was housed in the Belvedere gardens with the rest of the Papal zoo and frequently visited by Leo. He lived only two years, his death being universally mourned. A large portrait of him was painted by Raphael on a tower of the Vatican, with the inscription, "What nature carried off, Raphael's art has restored." Ulrich von Hutten's Testament of the Elephant is one of the most violent satires upon the Papacy at this time.

Giulio had taken orders and been made archbishop of Florence as early as May, 1513. His illegitimate birth was a bar to his receiving a red hat, but Leo had no difficulty in finding persons to swear that his father Giuliano had married his mother and Giulio was declared legitimate in time for the creation of the first batch of cardinals in September. As a mark of affection the Pope gave him his own title of S. Maria in Domnica. He was only following tradition in adding some of his intimates to the Sacred College, for a Pope needed relatives and friends there upon whom he could count. The others were Lorenzo Pucci, of the Florentine family who owed everything to the Medici: a good canonist and a Professor at Pisa, he had been the late Pope's datary. He was accused of being avaricious. The Pope often consulted him on financial questions. Then there was the closest of Leo's friends, Bernardo Dovizi, Bibbiena, who had done more than anyone to win him the tiara. He, too, hastened to take orders. Till about 1516 or 1517 he was "all and everything" with Leo, alone enjoying his complete confidence. Giulio's day of influence came later. Lastly, there was Innocenzo Cibo, the son of his sister Maddalena, who was only twenty-two. This nomination was as much an act of gratitude to Innocent VIII as a piece of nepotism. "What I received from Innocent, that do I give back to an innocent," he is said to have remarked. Cibo did him little credit, becoming one of the most worldly of the cardinals.

Leo was no less determined to use all his influence, as his father would have had him do, to uphold the authority of the Medici in Florence. His nepotism, his desire to see his relatives established in states of their own, was one of the keynotes of his policy, in the pursuance of which he was troubled by no scruples. In this he was merely a man of his time. Giuliano with characteristic extravagance had come to Rome with 400 horsemen in the autumn of 1513, Leonardo da Vinci being a member of his princely train, and had been made Gonfalonier of the Church. The conferring of the Roman citizenship upon him was celebrated with great splendour. There was one of the interminable Renaissance banquets, lasting six hours. A theatre had been built in front of the Capitol and decorated with pictures recording the relations between Florence and Rome. The Romans jibed freely at a living Pope and were merciless to a dead one : the weaknesses of Julius II were held up to ridicule in an amusing eclogue, which glorified Leo at his expense. After some mythological interludes Florence and Rome decided to unite under one rule—a point not without significance. On the following day the *Poenulus* of Plautus was performed. The Pope reduced the salt tax in honour of the occasion and a statue was decreed to him and placed in the Capitol by the grateful Romans.

The Florentines in Rome were talking of Giuliano being made King of Naples and Lorenzo Duke of Milan, rumours which the Pope at once denied. He decided that Lorenzo di Piero, then aged twenty-four, should rule Florence. He was not eager for the honour. Like Giuliano, he would have preferred to bask in the pleasures of Rome under a Medici Pope. The Magnifico Giuliano was far from strong, having inherited the weakness of his mother, and his temperament, though not altogether surprising in a consumptive, must have helped to impair his health. Lorenzo, who was careful to behave himself in Florence,

whatever he might do in Rome, wrote more than once to Filippo Strozzi to have uncle Giuliano summoned to Rome for the sake of his health as well as for the honour of the family, even in September, 1514, when he was betrothed to Filiberta of Savoy. He indulged in perfect orgies of debauch, shutting himself up in a house with half a dozen women. "He liked clever men about him and was curious about everything that was new. Painters, sculptors, alchemists, architects, and engineers were engaged by him at salaries which he could never hope to pay." He lived much at Urbino during his exile, where a wing of the palace was known as "the apartment of the Magnifico", and was often in Milan and Venice. Bembo, like his nephew in Florence, complained of the burden of entertaining the large suite which accompanied him everywhere. Bembo, Ariosto, Michelangelo and Leonardo were among his friends and Raphael painted his portrait, which shows obvious traces of the phthisis from which he suffered. Tall and fair, with a long neck and blue eyes, slow in movement and speech, kindly, humane, agreeable and clever, he was universally popular. Francis I of France was particularly fond of him.

Like Piero and his Orsini kin, Lorenzo was well set up, an excellent rider and good at all sports; in features he resembled his mother. Like Piero, too, he had neither the character, nor the initiative, nor the ability for playing a leading part. The Pope placed Goro Gheri by his side, bidding him listen to him as though he were himself, and it was for him that the instructions were drawn up which shed such an interesting light on the Medici methods of ruling Florence. Cardinal Giulio also wrote frequently, urging him to be wise and tactful. His pride and his overbearing ways—or was it merely his laziness?—quickly undermined his popularity: all decisions were now taken at the Medici palace instead of in the Palazzo della Signoria. He was much under the

thumb of his mother, Alfonsina. Lorenzo resented advice or interference, but he was incapable of carrying on without it. In 1513 he told her, when she remonstrated with him, that he meant to enjoy himself now that he was young and that they had a Pope. She need say no more. "I have made up my mind, but I will try to see that my amusements do not set a bad example or give trouble to His Holiness and our House." And the letters from ladies in Rome, among them well-known courtesans, show that he kept his word. A vivid light is thrown upon the relations between mother and son in 1514, when she urged him not to take part in a tourney which he was getting up, but to amuse himself by watching others risk their skins. Lorenzo not unnaturally resented the suggestion. "Lorenzo figlio benedetto," she begins, if any harm befalls him, it will react upon the whole family. "If we were somewhere where we could talk, we should have a great deal to say on the matter. When you write that you are determined to do what you like without regard to anyone, I reply that the man who does only what he likes is also sometimes left alone; and I think there is no greater want in this world or greater poverty than not to have someone to tell you the truth; and do not imagine that there is ever anyone so wise as not to need a friend and confidant to speak the truth to him and check him in some of his wishes. We are all human and only One has been perfect in this world; and even great princes and lords have counsellors and persons to tell them the truth and advise them, and the greater the man, the more he likes to hear the truth and be reminded of what is good for him; and the man who is no respecter of persons is not as a rule respected himself." She is particularly offended at his suggestion that it was the expense that influenced her. "If you think that I value money more than you, I can tell you that you are very much mistaken, and if I believed that you would stick to your idea, I should be

really angry ; but I know that you are like me ; we lose our tempers easily, but it is soon over, so we will say no more about it."

Unquestionably she was as able and shrewd as she was strong-willed, "virile, but grasping and never without a grievance", says Giovio, who knew her. She it was who stimulated Lorenzo's ambition and made him jealous of his uncle Giuliano. He would have been quite content to marry a rich wife and rule a small state with a good revenue. In all probability it was she who encouraged him to have himself declared Captain of the People against the will of the Pope in 1515, though no Florentine might hold the post. "I have made two captains who know next to nothing of war," said Leo of the appointments of Giuliano and Lorenzo. "Should an important war break out, I can't imagine what they will do." Lorenzo had none of the Medici taste for art and literature and music. There is no proof that, as has sometimes been asserted, he ever seriously thought of making himself absolute ruler of Florence.

The keynote to the new Pope's foreign policy was his determination that no single Power should dominate the peninsula. This Spain threatened to do, since she possessed Milan and Naples, "the head and the tail of Italy". To the Cinquecento Italian a free Italy meant a state of balance between the Powers there, whether foreign or Italian, which prevented any one of them from attaining a dominating position. This is why Leo opposed the suggested Franco-Spanish marriage and, with the assistance of Wolsey, replaced it by an Anglo-French alliance, thus ensuring that the rivalry between France and Spain should continue.

From the first Leo practised what he is said to have preached, that, as soon as you have come to an understanding with one Power, you must enter into negotiations with the other, his enemy—sail with two compasses, as he was said to do. His favourite

method of covering up his very tortuous tracks was to impose secrecy on the pain of instant excommunication. Having been induced to consent to Louis XII endeavouring to reconquer the Milanese, he made a secret treaty with Spain. When Louis announced his intention of advancing into Italy, Leo and his advisers were so exercised as to which horse they should back, that they consulted Machiavelli—such was already his reputation—who was living in retirement, writing his greatest works, through his friend Vettori. After long thought, Machiavelli concluded that France would be the winner. However, the death of Louis on New Year's Day, 1515, due to his efforts, in spite of his age, to do his duty by his sixteen-year-old English bride, Mary Tudor, the sister of Henry VIII, put another face on the situation. He was succeeded by François d'Angoulême, Francis I, in the full prime of his youth. The plans for the settlement of Giuliano were now pushed forward. He had been betrothed to Filiberta of Savoy, the aunt of the French king, and the Pope had promised to give her a dowry of 100,000 ducats, instead of her bringing that sum, like her sisters, says jealous Alfonsina. "I think him a great fool, but he is so infatuated that he told the Pope that, if he did not give her to him for a wife, he would take no other and he had better set about making a priest of him." Accounts make Filiberta neither young nor beautiful, but the match was considered brilliant for a Medici—most noble, as a chronicler puts it. Giuliano went to Turin for the marriage and then on to France, where he was much liked by Francis, who made him Duc de Nemours, early in 1515. Leo had bought him the Duchy of Modena from the Emperor, though he had himself recognized the rights of Ferrara to it a short while previously. To it he proposed to add Parma and Piacenza, which were claimed by both France and Spain as part of the Duchy of Milan. He spent immense sums on the splendid welcome he gave the

couple when they came to Rome. Ammone, the elephant, went all the way to Ostia to meet them.

Always a warm partisan of France, the Magnifico Giuliano wanted the Pope to declare himself openly against Spain ; but he was not to be tempted. He feared the ambition of the young king, one of whose heroes was Gaston de Foix. He even allowed Florence to join a league of Spain, the Emperor and others, the object of which was to check French designs on Milan : it also guaranteed Giuliano's duchies ; but it had even less solidarity than most of the leagues of the day. Leo, who had no desire to see Spain supreme, offered to ally himself with Francis, if he would renounce his claim to Naples. Suspecting, not unnaturally, that the Pope had designs on Naples for Giuliano, Francis declined. Yet all that Leo meant was to prevent France from holding both the head and the tail of Italy ; but though his diplomatic methods were not more treacherous than was then habitual, it is not surprising that no one trusted him.

Bad as his financial position already was—he had soon squandered the treasure left by Julius II—the Pope began to make warlike preparations ; but though he sent considerable sums to his allies, he refused definitely to commit himself. He was still hoping to come to terms with the French. When Giuliano fell ill, Lorenzo took command of the Papal troops, which were kept in Papal territory. Cardinal Giulio was incompetent and irresolute as Papal legate and the army was not allowed to move. Possibly this was not altogether displeasing to the Pope, though he had at last been forced to throw off the mask, for he was feverishly endeavouring to enter into negotiations with the rapidly-advancing French. He chose this moment for taking out another insurance policy with Henry VIII by raising Wolsey to the purple in the teeth of vigorous opposition in the Sacred College. On September 13th, 1515, the French won their great victory over the heroic Swiss at

Marignano. After the first day's battle news had arrived that the French were beaten and there was great rejoicing. On learning the truth after the second day the Venetian ambassador hastened to the Vatican and insisted on seeing the Pope, who was not yet fully dressed. It was a great disappointment to Leo, who could not conceal his alarm ; but the ambassador reassured him.

Since there was nothing now to stand between the French and Florence, if they chose to advance, the Pope came to terms with them. He gave up Giuliano's two duchies, Parma and Piacenza—a bitter blow—on condition that Francis kept the Medici in Florence and pensioned Giuliano and Lorenzo. Francis now expressed a strong desire for an interview with the Pope. Leo had no wish to have the French army in Rome, where it would be within striking distance of Naples. Florence would have suited him, with his troublesome fistula, but he was afraid that the well-known French sympathies of the Florentines might encourage the anti-Medici party. Finally, he suggested Bologna. Many of the cardinals protested at his going so far to meet the king as derogatory to the Holy See. Leo apologized, saying that, for his own safety, he could not act otherwise, but he had no intention of relaxing his efforts to expel the foreigner from Italy.

Leo was the first Pope not to have the Host carried before him on a journey. He waited at a villa outside Florence till all was ready, for the city was preparing to give her first Pope a worthy welcome, two thousand men working day and night upon the decorations. All the artists of note, among them Jacopo Sansovino and Antonio di Sangallo, were called in to help and twelve triumphal arches were built and decorated with imitations of the most famous treasures of ancient Rome, as well as with pictures and inscriptions in honour of Leo. Sansovino set up a sham façade to S. Maria del Fiore in wood,



Photografia, Alinari

Leo X Approaching the Palazzo Della Signoria, by Vasari

Palazzo Vecchio, Florence

(face p. 272)

said to be from a design by Lorenzo, which was decorated with statues and pictures in chiaroscuro by Andrea del Sarto. This particularly pleased Leo. On reaching the second of the triumphal arches, where was a statue of Lorenzo with the inscription, "This is my beloved son" (and we may be sure that Lorenzo would have completed the quotation) he was moved to tears. He thoroughly enjoyed the show, stopping more than once to inspect the works of art, and then proceeded to the rooms still known as his in the Palazzo della Signoria. He was lodged in the Papal apartments at S. Maria Novella. In the cathedral, where Mass was said by Giulio, he spent an unusually long time in prayer. Later, he visited S. Lorenzo and again shed tears as he knelt before the tomb of his father.

Bologna gave him anything but a cordial reception. There were no decorations and only a wooden cross for him to kiss. When he heard that there was only one silk canopy and one old cotton one, he had the silk one carried over the Host, himself going without. The people even raised the Bentivoglio slogan, "Sega, Sega!" (Saw) as he passed. The king, having been coached for his part by Paris de Grassis, arrived on December 11th. His noble appearance and bearing impressed the crowd as much as the poor show made by his suite disappointed it. The meeting took place in the great hall of the Palazzo Pubblico. Paris de Grassis warned his master not to raise his hand to his biretta in public as Alexander VI had done for Charles VIII, as such a sign of respect was unseemly in a Pope. While he was celebrating in S. Petronio a French soldier in the crowd shouted out that he wished publicly to confess to the Pope, accusing himself of having borne arms against Julius II. The king at once made the same admission, as did all his suite, but he pointed out that Julius had been their most implacable enemy, "nor have we ever known a more terrible enemy in war than Pope Julius; for

he was in very truth a most notable captain, better suited to command an army than to be Pope."

It is not known what passed in the private talks between King and Pope, but the question of seizing Urbino was certainly raised. Urbino bordered on Tuscany and Alfonsina had cast her eyes upon it as a state where her son Lorenzo could play the prince. The Pope, perhaps unwillingly at first, had consented. Francis did his best to save the Della Rovere Duke and, incidentally, suggested that Leo might give him the Laocoön. Leo firmly refused the first request, but promised the Laocoön. Having no intention of parting with the original, he at once set about having a good copy made, which would satisfy Francis. Undoubtedly Francesco Maria della Rovere had given the Pope grounds for complaint. In addition to his earlier offences, he had just refused to send his men to the Papal army and had then endeavoured to make trouble between him and the king.

Leo passed through Florence on his way back to Rome, where the Magnifico Giuliano was dying of consumption. Only two days before his death, which took place on March 17th, 1516, though Bibbiena had warned him that it was useless, he begged the Pope not to depose the Duke of Urbino from his state after all his kindness to the exiled Medici and particularly to himself. Leo refused to promise anything, saying that it was no time to discuss such matters. He must make haste to get well. Few men were more loved in their day than Giuliano "for a certain harmony of all the virtues that was in him". He seems to have embodied the chivalrous ideals of the time in an especial manner—a really good man who disliked bloodshed and all wickedness, says Vettori, generous to the point of recklessness: his goodness and noble courtesy deserved to be spared longer for the world, wrote his friend Castiglione. France then gave the tone to the chivalry of the West and Brantôme testifies that "he who has not seen

Mons. de Nemours in his gay years, has seen nothing, and those who saw him will call him the flower of all chivalry". Perhaps this generous appeal on behalf of his friends, which is almost unprecedented in the cynical Cinquecento, especially where family interests are concerned, helps to explain the affection he inspired. Ariosto put into his mouth the *canzone* to his widow, Filiberta of Savoy, beginning "Anima gentil", which is to be brought her by Bibbiena, who loved him as himself and had, of course, known him from childhood. Paris de Grassis warned Leo that, since he was not a man, but a demigod, he must not give way to grief, so he went off to his hunting lodge at La Magliana, as he liked to do when anything occurred to vex him, to amuse himself away from the public eye. Every evening there were cards and music.

Rumours of Leo's intentions towards Urbino were causing uneasiness in the little courts of North Italy. That "Machiavelli in petticoats", Isabella d'Este, the able Marchesana of Mantua, had an eye on politics when she came to Rome late in 1514 at the earnest invitation of her old friends Bibbiena and Bembo, backed by that of Leo. When sending her the news of his election Bibbiena had said how glad she must be that the new Pope was one who loved her and her whole house with "singolarissimo amore". Isabella had taken a fancy to Bibbiena at Urbino and invited him to accompany the Duchess to Mantua in 1509, but unfortunately he was not well enough to do so. He had been among those told off by Julius to amuse her little son Federigo when a hostage in Rome under the old Pope, who doted on the child, and he had visited Mantua in 1512. Naturally, with such friends her hopes ran high. Though the political advantages were nugatory, she enjoyed herself thoroughly. She was a guest of the Cardinal of Aragon in his palace on the Piazza Scossacavalli, by S. Peter's. Bembo and Bibbiena, with Castiglione and other humanists

such as Inghirami, who at once fell under her spell, and even Accolti delighted in showing her the sights. For her was performed Bibbiena's distinctly broad *Calandria*, which had been written at Urbino, in the presence of the Pope. In fact, she made herself as popular in Rome as she did everywhere and, at Leo's special request, her husband permitted her to stay in Rome for the carnival of 1515, after her return from Naples. "I am here in Mantua, but all my heart is in Rome," she wrote to Bibbiena when she was back at home with her captious, invalid husband. "In spirit I am still taking walks with you, enjoying your talk and that of the other Lords Cardinal, and kissing the feet of His Holiness." She sent many presents to him in token of her regard, among them a quilt of rare feathers and richly embroidered satin, which so roused Bembo's envy that he asked her to send him one like it. Bibbiena told her that he had never slept better in his life and that he could swear truly that there was not a single night when he did not think of Her Excellency.

The Duke of Urbino was now summoned to Rome to answer the charges against him. Instead, he sent the Duchess Dowager, Elisabetta Gonzaga, Isabella's bosom friend. At their first meeting the Pope advanced towards her, embraced her and treated her with the utmost kindness. She reminded him of Giuliano's affection for the Duke and of how she had held the little Lorenzo in her arms. To these appeals, made at her second audience, he answered not a word—the *prudentissima taciturnitas*—merely looking at her through his glass and shrugging his shoulders. The favourite smile could not be brought into play on this occasion. Luigi Gonzaga, who also made an appeal, says that Leo reinforced the ambiguous tone he adopted "with oaths so strong and awful that, knowing that they were certainly false, I shall be astonished if some day they do not have some miraculous result".

Leo had a not undeserved reputation for treachery, but deception and lucky fraud were almost legitimate weapons at this time, when violence, cunning and self-seeking were the foundations upon which the Italian conscience was built. Leo's morality was that of his day and he was perfectly frank about it. "Even if, with my own hand, I write you the exact opposite of what I am telling you," he once told an ambassador, "pay no attention." By declining to take sides in the quarrel between the Emperor and France, yet letting it be thought that he might do so, he prevented Francis, in spite of his disgust at his behaviour, from intervening to protect the Duke of Urbino. Lorenzo, now Gonfalonier of the Church, overran the whole Duchy without difficulty. The Pope, meanwhile, fell seriously ill, weeping copiously, after his wont, at the thought that his end, as a monk had prophesied, was near. However, he recovered and made Lorenzo Duke of Urbino. The cardinal of Urbino alone protested, but thought it wise to leave Rome from fear of consequences. Francis now compelled Leo to hand over Modena and Reggio to Ferrara, as had been arranged at Bologna, a humiliation which he felt keenly after losing Parma and Piacenza.

Della Rovere was not one to submit tamely. Early in 1517 he entered the Duchy with 5,000 Spanish and German mercenaries, lent him by Lautrec, Governor of Milan, and was received with open arms by his subjects. The Pope was completely nonplussed. As always, he was quite without money. He was, says Vettori, as capable of keeping a thousand ducats as is a stone of flying upwards. He was convinced that the Duke was supported by Venice and France—and small blame to them if it were true—stoutly though they denied it. He had lost all his friends by his double dealing. Even the Romans were pleased when Francesco Maria was back in his capital in February, but the Pope was beside himself with fury at being thus flouted by a petty Duke. Lorenzo

proved incapable in the field. Wounded early in the campaign, he refused to return to the front when he recovered: naturally, too, he declined to accept the Duke's challenge to settle the dispute by a duel. Leo's financial state grew more and more desperate and he was continually spending week-ends at La Magliana to keep up his spirits. The cardinals said openly that he could not stand the expense much longer. Not till the enemy mercenaries began to break up from want of pay did Lorenzo return to camp. Ugo de Moncada, viceroy of Sicily, arranged terms. Della Rovere was to return to Mantua with his artillery and the famous Urbino library and the Pope had to pay the arrears to his mercenaries. This war cost Leo some 800,000 ducats, towards which the Florentines, as Lorenzo's subjects, had to contribute heavily. His finances never recovered from the blow. Nor was Lorenzo satisfied with Urbino, which he would gladly have exchanged for Lucca, or for a state in the Romagna, as Francesco Maria was too popular there for it to be safe.

It was during this war that Giovanni delle Bande Nere began to come to the front as a fighting man of the first quality, a condottiere of the heroic age who, thanks to his virago of a mother, Caterina Sforza, had strayed into the tamer Cinquecento. So long as her brother-in-law, Lorenzo di Pier Francesco dei Medici, lived, Caterina had to fight for her son, since he claimed the guardianship. His dishonesty had sadly impaired the boy's large property. Settling in Florence she actually placed this young Achilles for a time in a convent for safety. When at the age of eleven he lost her, Jacopo Salviati became his guardian and his strong-willed wife, Lucrezia, was genuinely attached to the young firebrand, who was quite uncontrollable and unteachable. He shared her home, where he was brought up with his future wife, Maria, and the rest of her large family, till he was banished from Florence for killing another boy. He retired to

his villa at Trebbio, always his favourite home, where he spent his time in fishing and hunting, winning the affection of all on the estate, in spite of his rages and his wanton cruelty. Leo had not forgotten him. In due course he summoned him to Rome, where he lived much as Piero had done, and he was soon serving under Lorenzo. From the first, like his mother, he took the utmost pains with the training of his men.

In 1516 he married Maria Salviati, who was devoted to him, but quickly discovered that for him she was little more than another means of raising money. He continued to live the life of his kind and she had the humiliation of learning that she had also male rivals, against whom even she protested. Maria was left to dress and keep house on her husband's debts. Some touching letters of hers survive, but she received very few of Giovanni's curt notes, couched in a style that suggests a drill sergeant, which contrast strangely with the formal courtesy that was then universal.

Giovanni maintained an iron discipline, but, fearless himself, he respected courage in others. One day when he was advancing upon a Corsican—he soon learnt to prefer Corsicans as the best soldiers—with a drawn sword, the man exclaimed, “If you come near me, I will kill you.” Giovanni at once put up his sword and ever afterwards kept him about him in a position of trust. His men worshipped him. In the Urbino war he gave many proofs of his courage, notably by beating in single combat an Albanian who was considered invincible. Though recklessly extravagant, he was not venal in a venal age. It was not till they went into mourning on the death of Leo that his bands became known as the Bande Nere.

CHAPTER XX

THE CARDINALS' CONSPIRACY. GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE
NERE

(1517-19)

LEO's friends in the Sacred College were mostly among the younger cardinals who had secured his election, men of birth, wealth and position, such as d'Aragona, Sauli, Gonzaga, and Ariosto's unappreciative patron Ippolito d'Este. Ippolito was Castiglione's ideal of a well-bred churchman; his person, his appearance, his words, his every movement were so compact of grace (Castiglione's word for the *tertium quid* which makes a courtier and which is rarely found except in a man of birth) that in spite of his youth, thanks to his air of grave authority, when among elder churchmen he seemed better fitted to give than to receive instruction.

Another was the handsome, worldly young Alfonso Petrucci, cardinal of Siena. There was a good deal of discontent and jealousy in the College, but Petrucci had a genuine grievance. Leo had been instrumental in helping to expel his brother from the lordship of Siena, with the result that he lost all his property there. He had his share of the vindictive, passionate blood of those half savage tyrants and was consumed with hatred of the Pope for his black ingratitude. Not only had he worked hard to secure his election, but his father, Pandolfo, had helped him generously in exile.

His first idea was to stab the Pope himself while he was out hunting and off his guard, but this seemed too hazardous. However, he was intimate with a doctor named Battista da Vercelli who, for all his reputation, was a good deal of a blackguard, and induced him by

lavish promises to undertake to poison the Pope's fistula. Then he did all he could to persuade Leo to get rid of his own doctor and send for Vercelli, but his unwillingness to expose himself to a stranger spoiled the plan. Petrucci had spoken so openly against the Pope that he thought it wise to leave Rome. He had also intrigued with Francesco della Rovere, the Duke of Urbino, and had been warned by the Pope that, if he continued so to do, he would be punished. In his cipher letters to his secretary, Marcantonio Nino, who was left in Rome, he was rash enough to refer to the poison plot. Petrucci's behaviour had awakened so much suspicion that his letters were opened. By April, 1517, Nino had confessed under torture and Vercelli, who was in Florence, was shadowed to prevent his escape.

Petrucci was promised that, if he would return to Rome, he should recover his lost property in Siena; and when he hesitated, Leo gave him a safe-conduct, which was guaranteed by the Spanish ambassador. His friends warned him not to go, but he only laughed at them. The moment he entered the Pope's ante-chamber with his friend, Cardinal Sauli, they were arrested. The Spanish ambassador protested, but the Pope pointed out that the safe-conduct referred only to plots with Urbino, not to the heinous crime of an attempt upon his life. Sauli's arrest caused much surprise, as Leo had heaped benefices upon him, but so insatiable, or so spoilt, was he that he was piqued at not receiving the bishopric of Marseilles. The prisoners were confined in the worst dungeons of S. Angelo, but, by the special request of the rest of the cardinals, who were indignant at their treatment, they were allowed a servant each. Vercelli was brought from Florence and tortured, but it is not certain whether the cardinals were put to the question also; probably not.

The excitement was great. Paris de Grassis describes how, a few days later, on looking through

the keyhole, he saw a guard in the Pope's room, but said nothing to the assembled Consistory. Then Leo sent for Riario, who went cheerfully in, whereupon the Pope hastily left the room and shut the door. De Grassis noticed that he was pale and excited. When he asked whether he meant to go to the Consistory without his stole, the Pope bade him dismiss it. The arrest of the Doyen of the Sacred College, the wealthy S. Giorgio, who had been a cardinal for forty years, created a sensation. When, later, he was to be transferred to the Castel S. Angelo, he collapsed and had to be carried thither in a litter. Was he thinking of the Pazzi conspiracy? It was not long before he confessed his guilt, or at least admitted what had been deposed against him, for Petrucci said that he had mentioned his plan to Riario and Sauli. Riario had done nothing to discourage him, probably because he had not thought it worth taking seriously; but, had the plot succeeded, he would have had a good chance of becoming Pope.¹

Leo made the most of the plot. On June 8th he called another Consistory. The cardinals were angry, discontented and crestfallen. He told them that two more of their number had been implicated. After denouncing such treachery, he promised to pardon them, if they would confess and ask forgiveness. Their names had been given to the three cardinals in charge of the case. Leo then asked each in turn and when Soderini declared his innocence, the three denounced him. They also denounced Adriano Castellesi, Bishop of Bath and Wells, who stoutly protested his innocence; but when the Pope threatened him with imprisonment he fell on his knees and begged for mercy, admitting that he had heard Petrucci's threats, but looked upon them as boyish

¹ Riario seems to have joked with Petrucci on the subject, promising to make him Pope. Leo's malady also afforded the gayer cardinals a wide field for puns, such as "Fistula dulce canit."

blusterings, unworthy of serious consideration. They were fined 25,000 ducats each and forbidden to leave Rome till the money was paid. The Pope bade the College keep silence about everything under the most awful threats, but the news was all over Rome in a couple of hours. When a little later the fines were doubled, the Romans understood that Leo was using the plot to raise money for the expenses of the Urbino war. Both men fled from Rome, but Soderini was later allowed to live outside the city. Adriano was deprived of all his benefices, thanks largely to Wolsey. He lived at Venice till Leo's death, but was murdered by a servant when on his way to Rome for the Conclave.

The Pope made a moving speech to the Consistory on Whit Sunday, saying that he forgave his brothers in Christ who had helped elect him for their crimes against him. He shed plentiful tears not only in Consistory, but also at Mass, telling De Grassis that they were tears of sorrow for the guilty. At a Consistory where the cardinals' protests could be heard outside and where Leo had violent altercations with some of them, he deprived the three prisoners of all their benefices and their rank and handed them over to the secular arm. Vercelli and Nino suffered a traitor's death. Petrucci was strangled in prison, some reports saying that in his fury he thrust the confessor aside. Riario was restored to his rank for the huge fine of 150,000 ducats which Chigi found for him, and a promise to leave his palace, the Cancelleria, to the Holy See at his death. Sauli also recovered his status after paying a fine of 25,000 ducats. De Grassis whispered to the Pope at a Consistory that, when he began, "the Master of the Ceremonies is to blame", he thought that he also was to be inculpated. The Pope roared with laughter, as was his way, and the cardinals joined in the laugh when they heard the joke, saying that they had had the same fear. Though the Mantuan envoy wrote, like a good son of the age of Humanism, that the Pope deserved the

praise bestowed on Cæsar by Cicero for restoring Marcus Marcellus, there was widespread indignation at his high-handed behaviour, nowhere more than in Germany. People can hardly be blamed for believing that the plot had been staged largely in order to raise money, since Leo thus recovered a good deal more than a quarter of the cost of the Urbino war. When at last he appeared in public again to hear Vespers in S. Peter's, he gave further offence by being escorted by an armed guard through streets lined with troops.

Leo's next step was unprecedented and gives point to Pietro Aretino's description of him as the inventor of the greatness of the Popes. In the teeth of angry protests by the Sacred College he created thirty-one new cardinals in July, who paid more than a million ducats into his ever-empty Treasury. He thus definitely asserted the power of the Popes over the College, dominating it by his will, as he had done since the conspiracy, of which he was making such profitable use. The moment was well chosen, coinciding as it did with the inglorious end of the Lateran Council, which Julius had been compelled to summon. By his control of Florence the Pope also held a very strong position in central Italy. Three of his relations were among the new red hats, Giovanni Salviati, who, being blessed with his mother's character, attained to considerable importance. Benvenuto Cellini called him the Cardinale Bestia, but he had a quite legitimate grievance against him. Niccolò Ridolfi, also a nephew, became Archbishop of Florence and was a man of real culture. The third was Ludovico Rossi, son of Piero's natural daughter. The others were chosen from a wide field : we can see them in Vasari's picture in the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence. Among them were Ercole Rangone, son of Leo's benefactress, who was also dear to him because he was a good musician, and his successor in the Papacy, that sound scholar

and exemplary priest, Adrian of Utrecht, who was tutor to Charles V.

The Pope was still dreaming of peace in Christendom to be followed by a crusade. Bibbiena was even sent as special Legate to France. All the advantage went to the King, as the Pope allowed him to collect the Crusade tax for three years until the money should be needed. To increase his influence with the Pope Francis proposed that Lorenzo should marry Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne, who belonged to the Royal House. Leo was delighted. When he was also asked to stand godfather to the king's heir, Lorenzo was sent to act as proxy. The ceremonies took place at Amboise in April, 1519. Leo showed his usual reckless lavishness in his presents, valued at 300,000 ducats, as in the outfit of his nephew. There was a marriage-bed of tortoiseshell inlaid with mother-of-pearl and set with precious stones. The king assigned Lorenzo a revenue of 10,000 crowns. The tournaments and banquets continued for ten days. The effects of the *mal francese* upon the bridegroom were only too apparent and an eyewitness pitied the lovely young bride. Lorenzo stayed long enough at Blois to become wholly French in sympathy. He even adopted the French beard, so hated in Florence.

Madeleine was genuinely attached to her husband and he to her. We get a delightfully intimate glimpse of their life in Florence when she sent him a blank sheet of paper because he did not write to her from Rome. He replied in kind. He wrote her two letters, one very affectionate, the other atrociously written, full of the word *cito*, which was doubtless a joke between them, cold and stiff in tone. When she came back to her mother-in-law after visiting the Salviatis she found Goro Gheri there and Alfonsina told her that he had brought her a nice present, asking her to guess what it was. "Letters from Monsignore," she exclaimed. Goro then gave her the second letter. She complained that she could not

read it, it was in Italian. As it was getting dark, they sent for lights, since there was no secretary at hand. Alfonsina tried to help her, but at last Madeleine declared with a forced laugh that it was impossible to make it out and accused Goro of playing a trick upon her. He answered that it was a letter from Lorenzo in reply to her blank sheet and handed her the other letter. She began to laugh genuinely now as she opened it, in her pleasure at having news of her husband. She had an angry letter which she had written to blame him for his neglect in her breast, but would not send it since peace was made. "In fact, Signor mio, the more one sees of this lady, the more one realizes how kindly and attractive she is." She had the wit and the lively charm of the French court ladies of that day as we see them when Cesare Borgia went to choose his bride among them.

Lorenzo's health was rapidly failing. Naturally silent and melancholy, he shut himself up in his palace with his boon companion, Filippo Strozzi, his confidential secretary, Goro Gheri, and Moro Nobili, a well-known fool of the day and a favourite with the Pope, who had been brought up with the Medici. He would receive no doctors, nor be polite to his ailing mother or Cardinal Giulio, though he was always glad to see his wife. Madeleine died in giving birth to a daughter, Caterina, who was to become Queen of France. A week later Lorenzo followed her to the grave.¹ On hearing the news Leo is said to have exclaimed, "We no longer belong to the House of Medici, but to the House of God." The only surviving males of the elder branch of the Medici were Giuliano's natural son, Ippolito, and dark little Alessandro, generally held to be a son of Cardinal Giulio. Alfonsina, who at once sold her son's clothes by public auction in Florence, died in Rome in the following year after a long illness.

¹ Pieraccini gives the daily bulletins about his health and concludes that he died of consumption of the bowels.

The names of Giuliano and Lorenzo are inevitably associated with some of the greatest masterpieces of the Cinquecento. If Machiavelli thought of dedicating his *Prince* to each of them in turn, Michelangelo, commissioned by Cardinal Giulio, has put some of his noblest work into the tombs he made for them in the New Sacristy of S. Lorenzo, which he also built. The famous figures over them have nothing to do with the men whom they commemorate. It is Michelangelo at his greatest who looks down upon us from these statues in honour of the last of the elder line of the Medici.

Lorenzo was regretted by none, but he was given a magnificent funeral, organized by Giulio, who now assumed the government of Florence. He did his work admirably, showing great tact in handling the various factions of the city, while he was most successful in managing the finances. He even consulted some of the ablest Florentines, Machiavelli and Guicciardini among them, as to what they considered the best form of government for Florence, though he did not take their advice. In October he brought Lorenzo's daughter, the Duchessina Caterina, to Rome. She was welcomed with due ceremony by the Pope who exclaimed in Latin, on seeing the baby girl, "She brings with her the cares of the Greeks."

Two months after Lorenzo's death, in June, 1519, Maria presented Giovanni delle Bande Nere with the son for whom she had longed. Giovanni had again been in hot water. Gheri, alarmed by his debts and his escapades, had begged the Pope to find work for him. He had challenged Camillo d'Appiano to a duel for insulting one of his servants, though his own sister-in-law was married to the lord of Piombino, and, on his refusing, he murdered two of his men in an inn at Florence. For this he was ordered to remain in Tuscany, but not to come within ten miles of the city. A present of hawks and the birth of his heir, whom Leo named Cosimo, restored him to

favour, though he also wounded one of the Alamanni, old friends of the Medici. "A Medici wound an Alamanni," exclaimed the victim's father, in horror. But he promised to say nothing, only expressing a hope that the Pope would give him his son's few benefices, if he died.

The Pope sent Giovanni off to untidy Romagna, where so genuine a Sforza would be quite at home. Here, while doing valuable work in reducing the district to order, he established his bands upon a definite footing. Before a man could rise from the ranks, he had to face his commander in single combat and also fight a duel, first on horseback, then on foot. If he failed he was dismissed. In early days Giovanni, who, as a boy, took keen pleasure in inflicting cruelty on and torturing animals, executed the cowards and failures himself, but later he left this dirty work to others.

Whenever he was in Rome there was trouble. He ran through an Orsini, whom he detested, and quarrelled with another, known as the Leopard, about a woman. The Leopard sent to Monte Giordano, the headquarters of the clan, for reinforcements, but the Papal guards refused to let them cross the bridge. Giovanni, issuing from the Castel S. Angelo, forced his way back with the pick of his men, right through the two hundred of them who were waiting for him at the bridge-head.

In Romagna his brother-in-law urges him to come to the Pope, who is longing for him. His briefs of reproof are written only to satisfy public opinion. If he will but continue as he has begun, he shall have his reward. Giovanni was always a favourite of Alfon-sina, who, being a worthy daughter of a noted soldier, appreciated his vigour and force, doubtless contrasting him with her own Lorenzo.

CHAPTER XXI

LEO'S COURT AND AMUSEMENTS. SCHOLARS AND MEN OF LETTERS

THE remark, "Let us enjoy the Papacy, since God has given it us," fits Leo too well not to deserve to stick, though it rests only on the report of a Venetian ambassador. If genuine, it is possible that he made it to Giulio when he was urging him to do some of the disagreeable things which he preferred to leave to his conscientious cousin. No Pope understood better how to make the most of the good things of this world and, being a true Medici, he was able to enjoy all the best that that brilliant age could give him. Yet it is highly probable that he had a definite purpose in his determination to lead a cheerful life and keep himself as free as possible from serious worries. His health was not good and the doctors of the day wisely recommended their patients, especially in times of bad epidemics, to keep in good spirits as a valuable means of preserving health.

Music was the Pope's master passion. He had a good voice and, like all the Medici, had been taught to use it. He also had a thorough knowledge of music, playing and even composing in his younger days, and liked to talk about it. Everyone who had the honour of singing with him when Pope was given 100 ducats. Soon after his accession the old family friend Lorenzo da Pavia made him a first-class organ. But his taste was refined. Even after a banquet he liked good music such as he insisted on having in church. So enthralled was he sometimes that he became quite unconscious of the world around him, almost appearing to have swooned : the great head would sink forward on his breast, the white,

effeminate, bejewelled hand would beat time and he would hum the tune softly to himself. It was then the fashion for a prince to have a good choir, with some of the excellent Flemish singers, and his own was unrivalled. Many of his letters to foreign princes are concerned with the engagement of singers. Always tolerant of Jews, he paid the admirable Jew lute-player Gian Maria twenty-three gold florins a month and made him castellan of Verucchio, while the Spaniard Gabriele Marino was given the bishopric of Bari. The literary men were jealous of this preference and we find Pasquin being told that he is a fool for his pains to add verse to his lyre. He will be rich only if he is a lute-player.

In literature Leo's taste was anything but good, though it is true that the distinguishing mark of his papacy was the favour he showed to men of letters. Yet here again we must not exaggerate. The leading men who graced his court, from Bembo and Sadoletto to Accolti, were well known under Julius. They already gathered at the villas of their brother humanists Goritz, known as Corycius to his friends, and Colucci. Erasmus's oft-quoted praise of Rome—the sweet liberty, the marvellously rich libraries, the genial intercourse with scholars, the host of men of letters and the monuments of antiquity—also belongs to Julius. But under the warrior Pope, who told Michelangelo, when he was to make his statue for Bologna, to put a sword, not a book, in his hand, men of letters remained in the background. With the accession of Leo they stepped into the limelight and his fame owes not a little to their praise. The Papacy became again the centre of Humanism. The importance of this in encouraging the spread of the new learning abroad was undoubtedly great. The fame of the Italian humanists, and of their followers elsewhere, with the literary movements they initiated, owes not a little to Leo's indiscriminate and by no means judicious patronage.

All Grub Street now flocked to Rome as to their Mecca. The poets swarmed round the Pope in and out of season, following him with their compositions even into his bedroom and leaving him no privacy. They were well compared to a troop of monkeys trying to amuse a lion. Not that Leo was displeased with their attentions. He had the average taste of his day, the clerical taste, without a spark of originality or genuine insight, and preferred the Latin poems which then rarely rose above mediocrity. He would take up his glass, read through these compositions with great rapidity when they were passed to him even during dinner, and give judgment upon them at once. At the official banquet for the Medici feast of SS. Cosimo and Damiano in the year after his accession a number of poems were recited. The poets were rewarded with the Pope's usual lavishness, though there were too many of them even for his generosity to satisfy and there was not a little grumbling. Angelo Colucci, a sound humanist, once received 400 ducats for flattering him in mediocre Latin verse.

So struck was the Pope with a Latin poem on the unpromising subject of a game of chess by Marco Vida that he settled him as Prior in a monastery at Frascati with orders to produce an immortal epic on the life of Christ and his Latin *Christiade* scored a not unmerited success. But there is not a single poem which can be said to live to-day that owed anything to Leo. He appears to have taken no interest in the widely popular *Arradia* by that true poet Sannazzaro, though he highly praised his jejune Latin *De Partu Virginis* (in which he is too good a humanist to use the non-Latin word Jesus), possibly because he hoped it would prove a useful weapon against Luther. This did not prevent Sannazzaro from firing some of his stinging epigrams at Leo for his decision upon the question of a marriage of his friend, Cassandra Marchese. Fracastoro's *Syphilis* is, characteristically, one of the best Latin poems of the day. It is dedicated

to Bembo and sings the praises of Leo. Francesco Molza, with his *Ninfa Tibertina*, a daughter of Lorenzo's Nencia, was the best of Leo's Italian poets.

Probably we have lost nothing by the Pope not taking the greatest living poet of Italy, Ludovico Ariosto, under his wing. At least we have to thank him for a lively picture of the Pope and his ways. People had told Ariosto that, if he had gone to Rome to fish for benefices, he would have got more than one, for he had been one of Leo's oldest friends before virtue or luck had given him the Papacy, having known him in exile with Giuliano and Bembo and Castiglione and the rest at Urbino, and later when he returned to Florence. Here he had told him, such was the affection with which he regarded him that in time of need Ariosto was to turn to him as to a brother. So when he hastened off to Rome he already in imagination saw himself a bishop. Nor had the Pope forgotten him. After he had kissed the Papal feet, Leo bent forward, took him by the hand and kissed both his cheeks. He even granted the poet a bull of copyright for his works, which his old friend Bibbiena made out for him, not forgetting the fee—and that was all. Not that Ariosto is hard upon Leo, as he shows in the amusing analogue of the shepherd who found a spring in time of drought. First must drink all his relatives and friends from Florence, then those who helped him win the noblest of mantles; then those who aided him to recover Florence or befriended his brother in exile. Like the shepherd's jackdaw, dear though he had been to his master, Ariosto saw that, with so many to drink before him, he would die of thirst if he waited. At least, as we shall see, Leo appreciated Ariosto's comedies.

However, the small fry basked in a prosperity such as they were never to know again. To them it was an age of gold after the iron age of Julius and they looked back wistfully upon it in the hard times that followed.



Photograph, Alinari
**Pope Leo X with his Cousins, Cardinal Giulio dei Medici (left) and
Cardinal Luigi dei Rossi, by Raphael**
Palazzo Pitti, Florence

But the purses full of gold pieces which Leo kept by him for rewarding the poets are, as Pastor shows, legendary, since Serapica, the Pope's confidential steward and keeper of the privy purse, has left the most detailed account of all his benefactions. The poets were less lavishly rewarded than the musicians, but the goldsmiths did best of all.

With learning Leo was on safer ground and his declaration in a bull soon after his accession that, having loved good literature from his cradle and spent all his life among books, he wished to encourage men of talent to come to Rome, set the note for an important side of his rule. Pietro Bembo was the most representative man of letters at that time in Rome. Five years older than the Pope, he had been taken to Florence in 1478 by his father, then on a diplomatic mission, and spent two years there. Handsome, attractive, steeped to his finger tips in the culture of the day, and with the dignity of bearing and grace of manner of a Venetian patrician of the best, he had already found his way to the susceptible heart of the Duchess of Ferrara, Lucrezia Borgia. Then followed the six happy years at Urbino—he plays an important part in the *Cortegiano*—where he struck up a warm friendship with the Magnifico Giuliano, with whom he came to Rome in 1512. He had taken only minor orders so as to be able to hold benefices, and it was now that he regularized his sexual life, like many others of his class, by settling down with the beautiful sixteen-year-old girl, La Morosina, who was separated from her husband—the mother of his children, as he called her—to whom he remained warmly attached as long as she lived. Leo loaded him with benefices, granted him the right to use the Medici name and sent him on diplomatic missions. From the first he was a leading figure in the life of the Vatican, being especially intimate with Bibbiena, Castiglione and Raphael. He was also a notable collector of manuscripts and antiques.

Naturally, with Bembo and Sadolet at the Secretariate, the Papal letters were never better written. Bembo's output both of official and private letters was enormous, but this formed only a small part of his activities. Great scholar though he was, he is even more important as a champion of the claims of Italian against Latin. Though hardly a poet, he was the best of the rather pedantic imitators of Petrarch in the Cinquecento. As an influence and an educational force his value can scarcely be overrated.

Jacopo Sadolet was more the quiet, retiring scholar, who, after accepting most unwillingly the bishopric of Carpentras in 1517, would have at once retired to his See, had not Leo forbidden him. But he was a genuine humanist, who defended the use of the names of the old gods in the Latin letters of the Curia. Then there was Filippo Beroaldo, who had been Leo's loyal secretary in exile and whom he made Vatican librarian when Inghirami was run over after being thrown from his mule. He it was who edited the first six books of the Annals of Tacitus. Leo has no shame in admitting that he was an accessory to the stealing of the unique manuscript from a French abbey, compensating the Abbot with a printed copy and a plenary indulgence for the church, which he considered would prove far more profitable in the long run. He knew his world.

Following the example of his father, Leo at once set about re-establishing the University, which had lapsed sadly since Julius appropriated its funds. He appointed twenty-eight professors with generous salaries, including one of Hebrew, and his new constitution enjoined upon them a strict attention to their duties. Unfortunately the scheme was soon shipwrecked from lack of money and the unpaid professors were forced to migrate elsewhere. He also founded a college for the teaching of Greek under Lascaris, the great scholar whom he had known as a boy when he was in Florence. It was Lascaris who superintended the Greek press

that Leo set up in Rome. The Pope's example was infectious and Agostino Chigi also established a Greek press in his house. The excellent Pindar printed there robbed the Pope of the glory of producing the first Greek book in Rome. Aldus Manutius, the noted Venetian printer, dedicated his *Plato* to the Pope in a flattering letter. Leo replied by granting him the copyright of all the books that he might print or had printed for fifteen years. Leo unquestionably did all he could, according to his lights, to encourage learning and literature.

Though he limited sermons to a quarter of an hour, the Pope would send for the preacher of one that had pleased him and congratulate him, even give him a bishopric. He admired the elaborate style of oratory then in fashion, with the curious mixture of Christianity and Paganism that strikes us as so strange and at times shocked even Paris de Grassis. If Equicola referred in the presence of the Pope at a beatification to Castor and Pollux, who had been placed among the gods, this is how a preacher addressed the shade of Bibbiena in a funeral sermon : " We ask not to what part of Olympus thy virtue has wafted thee in thy immortal chariot : but when thou passest through the heavenly spheres and beholdest the heroes there, forget not to pray the king of Heaven and the other gods that, if they wish to enjoy the worship of men on earth, they may add to the life of Leo the years of which the cruel Fates have robbed thee and Giuliano."

The humanists of that day were mild and tame compared with those of an earlier date. But the old Adam was not quite dead. Christophe Longueil, a friend of Erasmus, appeared in Rome in 1516. If his charm won him many friends, notably Bembo and Sadolet, his learning awakened no little jealousy. Unfortunately, he had once made a speech maintaining the superiority of France over Italy, and this was raked up against him when it was proposed to give him the Roman citizenship. His zeal in copying manuscripts

was ascribed to his being in the pay of foreign scholars like Erasmus and Budé to spoil the Roman libraries of their treasures. The whole city was split into two camps on the question, which awakened far more interest than Luther's heresies. At last, when he was charged with treason before the Senate and the People, Longueil prudently left Rome in disguise. Young Celso Mellini denounced him in a speech which made an extraordinary impression and Castiglione, then in Rome on a mission, said that, had he been there, Longueil would have been thrown from a window or torn in pieces. Leo, who stood for the Frenchman, heard it and was impressed, but not converted. Mellini was soon afterwards drowned on a dark night in a flooded stream while hastening back to Rome from La Magliana with the news of a favour Leo had conferred upon him. He was widely mourned and the Pope built a bridge with an inscription on the spot. Longueil was later given the Roman citizenship for writing vigorously against Luther.

Like most of his contemporaries, Leo enjoyed a good improvvisatore. His favourite was the blind Raffaello Brandolini, a Florentine and an Austin friar, who had long been in his service. He was also his favourite preacher. The most famous improvvisatore of the day was Bernardo Accolti, brother of the cardinal, L'Unico Aretino as he styled himself, the unique Aretine. He had long enjoyed a great reputation throughout Italy, and had performed in Rome before Julius. Lively and witty, he was as good company as Bibbiena, but he was also something of a butt, with his claim to rank after Dante and Petrarch, and we may, perhaps, doubt whether the Pope, much though he enjoyed the showy, sonorous lines chanted to the accompaniment of a lute, was not enough of a Florentine thoroughly to enjoy poking a little fun at his unbounded vanity. Everyone was ordered to make way for him when he appeared in the

Vatican in his princely raiment, loaded with jewels and chains, escorted by a company of Swiss guards. His fellow townsman, Pietro Aretino, says that, when he was about to improvise, shops were shut and bishops and others crowded to listen to him. Such were his profits that he was able to buy the dukedom of Nepi on the death of Alfonsina. Tebaldeo, another clever improvvisatore, especially in Latin, was once given 500 ducats for a single epigram.

Fooling was, indeed, a prime necessity of life to Leo. He naturally went to extremes, says Pietro Aretino, who began life in Rome in the service of Chigi till he transferred to the Pope, "not would it be easy to say which gave him most pleasure, the talents of scholars or the chatter of buffoons". His delight in such company, greater than that of any other Pope, ill became his dignity, betraying a fundamental frivolity most unfortunate at a time when the Papacy was faced with problems of vital importance. Under Alexander VI morals were certainly more depraved, says Pastor, "but it is hard to say whether the subtle worldliness of Leo X was not an evil more difficult to cope with and fraught with greater danger to the Church".

A supper given by the Cardinal of Mantua, whom a Venetian ambassador later described as "fat, gouty, very fond of oysters and afflicted with syphilis", a few months after Leo's election, shows the kind of horseplay which was then popular. Cardinals d'Aragona, Sauli and Cornaro were present, with Bibbiena, possibly in charge of the twelve-year-old Federigo Gonzaga, son of Isabella d'Este, who was also there. At the head of the table sat Fra Mariano, the most famous buffoon of the day, and the courtesan Albina, with whom Cornaro carried on a lively flirtation the whole evening. "Before supper there were all kinds of mad pranks, as there always are when Fra Mariano is present. At the second course the capons began to fly about the table, thrown by the friar and

then by the priests : their faces and clothes were covered with gravy and sauces." Aretino assures us that he had seen Fra Mariano jump on the Pope's table, with all its food and silver in place, at least a dozen times, seize a couple of torches and fence with the beards of the other buffoons.

Serapica had orders to admit his fools to the Pope at any time. On the death of a cardinal such was the crowd of people coming to petition for his benefices that it was necessary to wait for hours for an audience. A Venetian ambassador describes how he spent the time dicing for goodly sums with the cardinals present. When Musuro, the Greek scholar, desiring to obtain a vacant benefice, told Serapica that he wished to be treated like Baraballo, he was instantly admitted. There were a number of these buffoons about the Vatican. Cardinal Petrucci courted the Pope's favour by presenting him with the Mad Bastard of Siena. But Mariano Fetti was in a class by himself. In private life he was admired for his kindness and charity. Pietro Aretino, who loved him, tells many stories about him. On the death of Bramante in 1514 he succeeded him as *piombatore*, sealer of Papal briefs, a post which enabled him, as he puts it, to turn lead into gold to the tune of 800 ducats a year ; the doors of his office were chained, he wrote, "as they should be for a madman". While he was a brother in S. Marco at Florence he won the friendship of Fra Bartolomeo—a fact which says much for his character—and the saintly painter began frescoes of St. Peter and St. Paul for him in the chapel of S. Silvestro on the Quirinal. "Viviamo, babbo santo—let us live, holy Daddy, for everything else is a joke," he exclaimed to Leo, parodying Catullus. The remark might be said to give the note of the Pope's court.

Fra Mariano, like Moro dei Nobili (so called because of his dark complexion), who was also a drunkard, and Brandino, a degenerate son of Poggio,

the humanist, were great gluttons. On ordinary occasions the Pope's table, though raised on a dais, touched that of his guests, and in carnival and on other feast days the buffoons dined at the lower end, where their feats of gluttony were a source of endless amusement to His Holiness, who was himself most abstemious and fasted regularly, and his friends. The buffoons had to put up with all the tricks the stewards played upon them, such as serving them with monkeys and crows in rich sauces. The Pope was particularly fond of lampreys dressed in a specially elaborate style, so it was easy to serve up a bit of rope in the same way to Fra Mariano. He was equal to the occasion. "Would to God that you played tricks like this on me more often," he exclaimed as he chewed it. "Sauced like this, I would gladly eat not merely ropes, but the chains with which they bind lunatics like you."

There is an ironical poetic justice in the Pope who was called upon to face the trouble initiated by Luther having a friar for his buffoon, and he may well have enjoyed the position himself, seeing that he shared to the full the hatred of his contemporaries for the mendicant orders. One remembers the story of Bibbiena, still a layman, and his adventure with a sham friar during carnival in the *Cortegiano*. Once, when a bad comedy by a monk was played before the Pope, he had the luckless author tossed in a blanket by way of a *moresca* to amuse his guests, and dropped heavily upon the stage, then stripped and, hard though he fought to escape the indignity, horsed and soundly spanked by his grooms. The unfortunate man had to take to his bed as a result. The Pope sent him three ducats by way of compensation.

Leo's love of buffoonery did not spare his favourite art. He enjoyed humouring an eccentric musician by having the hangings taken from the walls, as he believed that the voices would sound more clearly,

and the arms of the lute and viol players tied to their sides so that the notes might be jerked out with greater vigour. Is it possible that the musician was, for once, fooling the Pope?

But the minor poets, the literary small fry, who habitually take themselves with the utmost seriousness, gave the best sport. Under Julius II a couple of obscure poetasters dressed as Orpheus had been given laurel crowns, possibly in all seriousness. There was fat Querno, who came from his native Calabria with hair almost as long as his epic and was solemnly crowned with a garland of laurel, cabbage and vine leaves, after being proclaimed arch-poet, to his unbounded satisfaction, at a gathering of the wits of Rome, and giving alternate exhibitions of his prowess in reciting and drinking. Leo was delighted. He pensioned him and often had him at his table, when his wine was mixed with water if his verses were poor. Querno was by no means a bad improvisatore, whether in Latin or Italian, and a poet as good as the average about the court. Supposing his answers are impromptu and genuine, Leo on occasion capped his verses very neatly in Latin.

Even Paolo Giovio, in his laudatory life of Leo, is shocked at the tricks played on Baraballo of Gaeta, an aged priest of good family, but a wretched poetaster, who considered himself a second Petrarch. They had begun at Florence and had worked so well that he demanded to be crowned on the Capitol. When his relatives tried to dissuade him from making a fool of himself, the poor man said they were jealous. The farce was staged for the Medici day of SS. Cosimo and Damiano. Had he not seen it, Giovio could not have believed it possible that this venerable old man should have let himself be clad in a mantle of scarlet and gold, and thus escorted to the banquet, where he was welcomed by a fanfare of trumpets. So bad were the verses he chanted that the guests could hardly keep straight faces. Then he was mounted on the

elephant in its finest housings, but Ammone was so perturbed at the noise and the trumpets that he refused to go beyond the Ponte S. Angelo. The Pope and the cardinals were enjoying the sight from the castle. The incident is commemorated in intarsia on one of the doors in the Stanze of the Vatican. Baraballo is seated on the elephant in his robes, solemnly holding a laurel bough in his hand.

Agostino Chigi continued on terms of friendly intimacy with the Pope, who borrowed heavily from him. There is a touch of Trimachio about his style of living, though such extravagance was entirely in accordance with the taste of this splendour-loving age—the ivory bed inlaid with gold, silver and precious stones, the use of nothing but silver vessels in the house, even the banquets at which he often entertained the Pope. It is the display of the man who has nothing but his wealth behind him. The great banqueting hall was hung with precious tapes-tries and the usual vast meal was served, followed by the usual music, which was often required to keep the guests awake. Before this dinner, said Leo, he had felt at ease with his host, whereupon Chigi raised the hangings and showed some mangers : he had given the banquet in honour of the completion of his stables, doubtless with recollections of his promise to Julius II. At another banquet all the plate was thrown into the Tiber as soon as it had been soiled, but the canny millionaire had been careful to have nets spread to catch it. On another occasion each of the twelve cardinals invited found his own arms on the plate he used, which he was allowed to take away with him. He was also served with the speciality of his province, fish and other dainties having been brought from the French coast, from Spain, and even from the Levant alive. Chigi's health was failing and he was unable to enjoy the rich food he placed before his guests. In 1518 the Pope was present at his marriage with his charming Venetian mistress, by

whom he had several children, and himself held the hand of the bride during the ceremony. Such marriages were long quite common in Italy. On another occasion Leo witnessed the drawing up of his will. Chigi felt that such a witness would prevent any tampering with it. Strascino, a reciter, improvisatore, entertainer and performer of dramatic monologues who was then much in demand, amused the guests after a fish dinner which is said to have cost 17,000 ducats.

The banker Lorenzo Strozzi, brother-in-law of the Pope's niece Clarice, gave a macabre banquet in 1519 which made a sensation. The Venetian ambassador who describes it says he would have given two ducats to have been there. The guests were the Pope's cardinal relatives, Rossi, Cibo, Salviati and Ridolfi, a number of Florentines, Fra Mariano and his brother fool, Brandino, and three courtesans. On arrival they were led by a single farthing dip up and down stairs, through corridors, to a room draped in black and ornamented with skulls. There was a skeleton with a candle behind it in each corner. On the table, covered in black, was a dish with four skulls and four cross-bones. When these were broken, pheasants appeared from the skulls, sausages from the bones, but only the fools touched this light collation. Then they entered a brilliantly-lighted dining-room, where was a sumptuous feast. Suddenly a glass of wine and a salad-plate appeared mysteriously in front of each guest. Next the lights went out. When they were re-lighted, doubles of Fra Mariano and Brandino had appeared and spoke, but vanished almost immediately. By now nearly all the guests were seized with vomiting. After this a regular, normal banquet was served, but the cardinals declined to stay.

One of the courtesans present was Madrema-non-vuole (Mother-would-not-like-it)—Madrema for short—perhaps the most prominent of these ladies in Leo's

day. Pietro Aretino, who preferred to give out that his mother was a member of the profession to admitting that his father was a poor shoemaker, was never more at home than in such company. He had a great respect for Madrema, whom he had launched upon her career. Dipinta Nicolosa, of the tribe of Judah, had inaugurated the fashion of going about with half a dozen maids, a ducat's worth of rouge on her face and a fan in her hand, promenading the churches, then a popular place for attracting attention, and reading the psalms in Hebrew. She was from Spain and letters of hers in Spanish are preserved in the correspondence of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, who once engineered a plot to carry off Madrema from a captain who had taken her with him into Romagna. The best of the courtesans had often to put up with pretty rough treatment, as we learn from Veronica Franco. Madrema was followed by ten pages and ten maids when she walked abroad and escorted by nobles, dukes and ambassadors to Mass. She is said to have known Petrarch and Boccaccio by heart and to have been fond of quoting Virgil, Ovid and Horace. Aretino could name a couple of dozen men of birth, noted for their eloquence and their scholarship, who could not hold a candle to her. When this was the female society of the Sacred College, it is easy to understand why Bibbiena was delighted at Giuliano's marriage, thanking God for it, as the one thing wanted in Rome was a court of ladies. Men who had lived at Urbino knew from experience the value of the influence which the right kind of woman can exercise and at the moment when Bibbiena was writing all Rome was enjoying the visit of his old friend Isabella d'Este.

Hunting had been a master passion with Leo, as with his father, from boyhood and it was then a regular amusement with the younger cardinals. Even the austere Paolo Cortese recommends it as essential for their health in his book on the duties of a cardinal.

In the Cinquecento there was a regular park by the Baths of Diocletian, first stocked with game by Ascanio Sforza, where Cardinal Ippolito d'Este gave a splendid hunt in honour of Isabella d'Este, followed by a ball. There was keen rivalry with horses and dogs, which were common presents. Serapica (mosquito), so called from his diminutive stature, Leo's confidential chamberlain, had long been in his service as huntsman. In July, 1513, the Pope wrote regretfully declining an invitation to a hunt from Cardinal Farnese, afterwards Pope Paul III, and envying him his freedom, but by January, 1514, he could resist the temptation no longer, for he hunted in all weathers and put up with every discomfort, nor did these expeditions ever seem to do him any harm. A ride or even a walk over open country in a good breeze would, he believed, do more than anything else to cool the heat of his blood. He shocked Paris de Grassis by riding out without stole or rochet and with leather boots on, so that the devout could not kiss his feet, only laughing at his protests. And henceforth every autumn he went on a regular round of hunting expeditions, always ending up at La Magliana, five miles from Rome.

Girolamo Riario, nephew of Sixtus IV, who realized the splendid sport this wild though malarious district might afford, had built the original lodge, which successive Popes, notably Leo himself, enlarged and beautified. Here he spent the happiest hours of his papacy. First he would go to Viterbo for the pheasants and partridges and the hawking, a sport in which he took the delight of his day. Then came the Lake of Bolsena, a district lorded over by the Farnese, where he fished and hawked, being especially fond of the islands on the lake. From there he went on to the Corneto region for the deer and wild boar and other big game, moving slowly towards Civitavecchia. The great amphitheatre at Corneto seemed to be designed by nature to be a trap for game. Thence

SCHOLARS AND MEN OF LETTERS 303

he went on to Palo and La Magliana, where he would spend a month. The French set the fashion and the hunts were organized on the most elaborate and up-to-date lines, dogs and nets being imported from France, regardless of expense.

Leo was very popular at La Magliana, where his coming was more profitable than the best of harvests, for he showered money on the peasants. He knew them all personally, was fond of talking to them, helped them when in trouble and dowered their daughters, for he loved the place and his "*dulces venationes*". The hunting party there often consisted of 300 persons, including his Swiss guards, who were useful in rounding up the game. Cardinal d'Aragna, who was first in charge of the hunts, went a journey to the North in 1517, when he saw one of Raphael's tapestries nearly finished at Brussels and wrote back enthusiastically. At Malines he bought a quantity of hawks and falcons for the Pope, while from Marseilles he sent off 250 dogs. Serapica, however, was the most prominent figure. His intimacy with the Pope caused no little jealousy; he began by brushing dogs, says Aretino—he had been kennel-man to Cardinal Sanseverino—and ended up as Pope.

Leo took his sport very seriously. He bids the castellan of Corneto be sure he cuts a good figure when he comes "with all these literati and others who are with me". The dinner must leave nothing to be desired, "because they are people of note and very near my heart" (October 18th, 1518). Here again we see the importance he attached to the men of letters. Musicians were always with him and often reciters and entertainers. At La Magliana there were entertainments of all kinds, since it was close to Rome. Always a model of patience, no matter what the weather, and a strict observer of the rules, the easy-going Leo could be extraordinarily severe upon anyone who misbehaved himself in any way or

frightened the game. Even men of high rank then experienced the rough side of his tongue. A poor bag put him in the worst of tempers. Woe betide anyone who asked a favour of him then. But never was he more genial than after a good day in the field.

Molosso and Posthumus have described these hunts in Latin verse, the Pope in his white robes riding out followed by the cardinals in red jackets and black caps, then taking his seat on a hill, like Olympian Jove, with the other divinities (cardinals) round him. He played no active part in the hunt, though on occasion he was known to take out his glass and despatch a stag caught in the nets with his knife. Other members of the court are described, including L'Unico Aretino : " raised above men and the skies by his genius, he is not a man but a god ", a huntsman no less expert than a poet. The nets are round the wood, the soldiers lined up to drive the game, trumpets sound, dogs bark. Fra Mariano, from the top of a cypress, shouts and gives the signal, waving his cap which had just been torn to pieces by the dogs. Or, while he brandishes his spear and spurs on his jaded mule with his heels, the Papal clown has fallen into a muddy ditch amid roars of laughter and someone holds him there while pretending to help him. The poet Postumo is knocked down by a boar, but rescued by his pupil Rangone ; a soldier causes much amusement by running a wolfhound through in the belief that it is a wolf ; handsome Petrucci rains arrows on the deer ; huge Sanseverino, a lion skin round his shoulders, spears a boar from side to side amid loud applause ; another, which has gored a number of dogs, is run through the neck by Bibbiena, who had left the deer and galloped up to the rescue. Firearms were then used only to frighten the game. When a wounded wolf rushes straight at the Pope, the whole hunt hastens to help him. The diminutive Serapica is tossed by a bull—he was an expert bull-fighter—which had strayed among the game and which

he had attacked, but is on his legs again in a moment and kills it with his axe. A fiery Modenese, exiled for killing a man, strikes the eye out of a soldier for appropriating game which he claims as his own and in turn has his cheek laid open. The pair are separated with great difficulty. Then an excellent huntsman, nearly mad with drink, flings himself on a boar which has killed a favourite dog and seizes its ears with his teeth, but is ripped open by it and killed. And someone plays a trick on a certain Corineo, telling him that his beloved Galeazzo is in danger, and sending him off on a wild goose chase. Finally a splendid falcon, which has pluckily engaged a hawk, is killed by an eagle, to the deep regret of Cardinal Orsini, who was then in charge of the Pope's hunt. He proposes to bury it on the top of a tower with its chain and a trophy of beaks of birds killed that day and the Orsini bear carved near by.

The Pope walks home and there is a merry supper. He roars with laughter at the abbot of Mantua, who had come in late after sleeping through all the noise of the hunt under a tree and is amazed at the quantity of game killed. Or we see him, near Bolsena, going over the incidents of the day, while some warm themselves by the huge fire and others admire the tapestries recording the history of the Farnese family. The party does not break up till midnight. Crowds watch them return to Rome, the carts laden with game.

In the remoter districts the accommodation for the guests was very primitive and the crowding most uncomfortable, but, for all their magnificence, the men of the Renaissance, even in the highest circles, seem to have been quite indifferent to such discomforts. The Venetian ambassador says that at one time there were two thousand people with the hunt in 1520, when he was a guest.

If on occasion Leo enjoyed a game of chess, which he played well, he was very fond of the popular gambling card-game of Primiera. It proved a costly

luxury for the extravagant Pope, for he distributed gold pieces freely among the onlookers, whether he won or lost, particularly on August 1st, when he played in public with some of the cardinals. Yet he could not say enough against dicing.

His open-handed generosity was universal. With his natural kindness he would, had it been possible, have made everyone happy about him. He lavished alms on the poor and distressed and redeemed many captives from the Turks. His attitude towards the American Indians was no less humane. He held that not only Christianity, but Nature, forbade slavery. They must be won to Christianity by kindness, not by force ; and he endeavoured to intercede for them with Ferdinand the Catholic, though with small effect.

Leo was always short of money. Possibly the shifty life of his years of exile and debt had a demoralizing effect upon him. Like other extravagant people suddenly coming into a fortune, he believed that the treasures of the papacy were inexhaustible : also, he regarded lavish generosity as the first duty of a prince. Yet he neither taxed the Romans heavily, nor exercised his privilege of seizing the estates of deceased cardinals. Instead, in order to encourage ecclesiastics to help in making the city more beautiful, airy and healthy by building, he granted them full liberty to bequeath their real estate as they liked. The jealous Romans always charged the countrymen of a reigning Pope with avarice and in the case of the Florentines possibly with more justice than usual. They flocked to Rome to batten on their first Pope who was powerless to stem the tide. There are so many Florentines that it is pitiable, Isabella d'Este was informed just after Leo's election. "All the palace, all Rome is nothing else." At one time there were thirty Florentine banks there, which made the most of the Pope's need of money. Leo had a much larger household than his predecessors and the names of most of the leading Florentine families appear in it. The fact that he was

also virtually ruler of Florence tightened the relationship between the two capitals. Many of the lesser poets and other hangers-on of the Vatican also came from Florence. Leo had no illusions about his countrymen, saying that only two of the hundreds about him had never asked him for anything, but had merely commended their country to him, a wise man (Piero Soderini, who held aloof from the Vatican) and a fool (Carafulla).

His three sisters were also in Rome, living in his Palazzo Lombardi where Lucrezia Salviati remained till she had to give it up to Margherita of Austria, after whom it was renamed the Palazzo Madama. They were all on the look-out for pieces of ecclesiastical preferment, in which they often did good business. Their quarrels and jealousies afforded the Romans plenty of amusement and must have taxed their brother's patience. In a letter from Alfonsina (February, 1514) we see Lucrezia very angry because Leo did not give the priory of Capua to one of her protégés. Saying that she was not used to put up with such treatment and could not bear it, she went to the Pope and complained at length. Everyone was against her, she said, Alfonsina laughed at her and Lorenzo was perpetually annoying her husband. A few days before this the palaces and the Banchi had been full of a scene made by Contessina Ridolfi about some accounts, when nothing would quiet her and she was overheard by outsiders.

After the Urbino war the Papal finances became desperate. Towards the end of his life Leo was borrowing money at 40 per cent. All the cardinals and his friends had been drawn upon. Even Serapica lent him 18,000 ducats. A few months before his death he granted the Florentine bankers, the Bini, the right to sell all vacant offices and take a fixed share of the proceeds till they had recovered their 156,000 ducats. He pledged to them his three tiaras, as well as his silver, including the Papal altar plate.

He also created a number of new offices. In 1520, at the suggestion of Cardinal Pucci, who often advised him in financial matters, the institution of a new Order of 401 Knights of S. Peter's brought in 401,000 ducats. A Venetian ambassador remarks that the doors of the Pantheon could not have been of gold, as rumour had it, or Leo would not have left them in their place. The same authority says that, while Julius allowed 4,000 ducats for his table, Leo spent twice the sum. Not that he was indulgent to himself. He had but one meal a day, when, according to Paolo Giovio, the talk at table was generally serious. He would converse pleasantly and charmingly about God, Nature, religion, questions of law, life and morality and other subjects that required learning and intelligence. One remembers that Leo once read aloud a passage in Giovio's History and told the attendant cardinals that, after Livy, he did not know a more elegant or more eloquent writer. Naturally, therefore, Giovio was an admirer.

To the end of his life Leo, like other Popes, thoroughly enjoyed carnival, watching it, as did Julius II, from the Castel S. Angelo. This was expected of a Pope by the Roman people, who also expected cardinals to give splendid entertainments and take an active part in all that then went on. Those who did not were very unpopular. The younger cardinals often went masked and presents of masks were not uncommon. But Leo wanted more than this. "He is learned and fond of learned men and a good cleric," said a Venetian ambassador, "but he must have his pleasures." In August, 1520, the Mantuan ambassador writes that he is at the Castel S. Angelo, avoiding business as much as possible, doubtless leaving it to Giulio. "On the 1st and 2nd of the month he gave two magnificent banquets, with comedies and music." The year before he had some actors to perform in the Castle. He was fond of the theatre and Serapica's accounts show that he enjoyed these theatrical



Photograph, Altinari

Cardinal Bibbiena, by Raphael

Palazzo Pitti, Florence

performances even on his hunting expeditions. Nor did his taste in jokes differ from that of other men of the day. Thus he was present at the performance of the *Calandria* in honour of Isabella d'Este in the apartments of Bibbiena, who generally superintended the comedies at the Vatican and encouraged the young nobles to act. The performance was memorable for the scenery of Baldassare Peruzzi, the advanced realism of which marks a definite epoch in the history of Renaissance stage decoration.

Paolucci describes a performance of Ariosto's *Suppositi* in the Castel S. Angelo in 1519. He found the Pope walking up and down a room with the younger cardinals. As the company filed into the hall for the performance, he gave them his blessing, entering last of all. On the curtain Fra Mariano was displayed being tortured by little devils. As it went down the Pope turned his glass upon Raphael's scene of a street in Ferrara with lively interest. The lights were arranged to form "Leo X Pon. Max." The Pope and his friends laughed heartily at the prologue, which joked freely about the title. The little organ given him by the late Cardinal d'Aragona provided good music between the acts. In the crush to get out Paolucci, jammed against the seats, nearly had his leg broken, but was comforted by a special blessing from His Holiness. In the supper room Cardinals Rangone and Salviati talked to Paolucci, who was Ferrarese ambassador, of the excellence of Ariosto's comedies, but as they were leaving Lanfranco Spinola expressed regret that His Holiness listened to such broad plays, a regret that would have been quite beyond Leo's comprehension. Leo asked for Ariosto's *Negromante*, but it was not popular at the Vatican owing to the openness with which the prologue satirizes the sale of indulgences. The liberal Pope, we are told, will deliver a plenary indulgence at your door, if not for nothing, at least for less than artichokes cost in May. Giovio says that Machiavelli's *Mandragola* was played

before the Pope by actors from Florence. Though it is undoubtedly the best of Italian Renaissance comedies, the tone and the subject must have shocked many more than those who disapproved of the *Suppositi*; but at least it is a monk and not a priest whom Machiavelli satirizes so unmercifully.

CHAPTER XXII

LEONINE ROME. RAPHAEL AND THE ART WORLD

UNDER the rule of the Medici Pope the population of Rome increased rapidly. Men flocked thither, especially from the North, since taxes were light, trade flourishing and war unknown, and the Pope gave them every encouragement. It is said that they built 10,000 houses and that the population rose to 85,000, but obviously this is an exaggeration. The census of 1517, which contains only property-owners, shows that the true-born Roman was in a minority in his cosmopolitan capital; also, that the courtesans owning property outnumbered the honest women.

Yet Leo was not a builder Pope, like Martin V or Innocent VIII. He left the city much as he found it. A visitor from the North entering Rome by the Via Flaminia through the Porta del Popolo would follow the Via Lata, now roughly the Corso, which ended at the Tarpeian Rock on the Capitol. The first half of the road ran through fields and gardens, interspersed with ruins. When we blame the Romans for using ancient Rome as a quarry, we should remember that more than half the city was then ruinous. Luther noted that the rubbish was often a spear's length in depth. These masses of rubbish were conducive neither to the health, nor to the safety, nor to the prosperity of Rome. The rest of the Via Lata was a jumble of palaces, hovels, shops and Roman remains, spanned by three arches. Uneven and irregular, it was long the straightest street in Rome and therefore used for the Carnival races. Hence its later name. In Leo's day building there was increasing. The Piazza di S. Marco (Venezia) had long been fashionable.

Leo began the Via Leonina (Ripetta), and the Via del Babbuino, finished by Clement VII, thus giving its definite character to this desolate region, with its fan-shaped street system spreading from the Piazza del Popolo. The increase of building cleared away a quantity of undesirable rubbish, while the custom of painting the houses on the outside did much to brighten the city.

The breaking of the aqueducts had forced the Romans to leave the hills and settle on the fetid, ill-drained ground between the Capitol and the Tiber, which, though still the main drain, provided better water than the wells and swamps round it; indeed, Tiber water was considered healthy by the strong-stomached Cinquecento Roman and more than one Pope took it with him when travelling. Obviously enteric was unknown. The chief inns were round the Piazza Navona. Through this region ran the principal street of Rome, the Via Papale, roughly the Corso Vittorio Emanuele, the road followed by the Pope on his *Pessesso* from the Vatican, over the Ponte S. Angelo, to the Lateran. Near the bridge it was called the Via dei Banchi and was the centre of the business world. Here the leading bankers and merchants, mostly Florentines, had their offices and close by Leo built for them the church of S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini. All the Tiber district was a network of alleys, the balconies often shutting out the daylight, where the filth of ages accumulated. Floods would drive the inhabitants up to the hills and leave deep layers of mud and silt behind them. Above the houses rose the towers of the feudal nobles. Round the churches, with their low towers, often almost hidden by monasteries and other buildings, generally clustered more houses. The Forum was already the Campo Vaccino, a grazing ground for cattle, with the top of a column or an arch rising here and there above the ground, as it was to remain almost to within living memory. Beyond it was that inexhaustible

quarry, the Colosseum, which, like many other buildings, had been badly damaged by the earthquake of 1348. In primitive pictures Rome is often indicated by this, with the Torre delle Milizie and Trajan's column, placed side by side. The other hills, the Pincian, Esquiline, Aventine and Coelian, contained little but fields, vineyards and ruins. The Palatine was probably even then the most beautiful of the deserted hills, the Roman pines and cypresses giving the right note to the ivy-clad ruins, pied with a mass of wild flowers in spring.

Till the "Babylonish captivity" at Avignon the Popes had made the Lateran their home, but it had been much damaged by a disastrous fire and when they returned, they moved to the Vatican, in another unhealthy district, the Lateran being left isolated and largely derelict. On the other side of the river Julius II had driven the Via Giulia, long the best street in Rome, which is once again becoming fashionable, through the alleys to the West of the Via Papale. He used every means that occurred to his forceful character to induce people to build worthily along it, as well as in other derelict regions which he favoured, as on the left bank of the Tiber, where Chigi was busy upon the beautiful Farnesina. It was already the thing for a cardinal, or a rich merchant, to spend his wealth upon the restoration or embellishment of one of the many churches, which were badly in need of such attention. Thus Leo X, whether as Pope or cardinal, carried out extensive alterations in his titular church of S. Maria in Domnica, which owes its portico to him.

Julius II had taken a characteristically decisive step by embarking upon the rebuilding of S. Peter's with Bramante as his architect. The façade of the great Gothic fane of Christendom was still intact, but behind it the work of destruction and reconstruction was being systematically pushed on—"a pitiable sight", says a French traveller. The cardinals strongly

objected to having to say Mass in the temporary nave and the chapels off it amid the dust and the draughts, especially in winter. The Vatican, too, was growing. By the Belvedere were already gathered the best of the newly-found statues, such as the Apollo, the Tiber, the Venus and now the Laocoön, most of them in their niches of greenery in a lemon grove, while a number of other antiques were scattered about the gardens. "I am living here in the Belvedere," wrote Baldassare Castiglione to his mother in the last year of the life of Leo, "which is a real refreshment. Would to God you had as delightful a place to live in, with this beautiful view, these lovely gardens, and all these noble antiques, basins and running waters. Best of all, I am close to the Pope's palace. . . . Everyone entering Rome passes through the street below, as well as those who go to walk in the fields; and after supper I amuse myself watching the crowds of boys and girls at their games."

In art Leo merely followed in the footsteps of his predecessor, whose ideals were grander and nobler. He could never have risen to the conception of the rebuilding of S. Peter's. Raphael he inherited from Julius, for whom he had already done his best work in the Vatican. Leo overwhelmed him with commissions, thus obliging him to leave more and more to his pupils. Naturally he began by completing the Stanze and the new Pope appears there as Leo I in the Repulse of Attila from Rome, seated on the white mule he rode at Ravenna, in the Stanze d'Eliodoro, the first of the frescoes painted in his reign. Those in the Borgia Tower deal with incidents in the reigns of Leo III and Leo IV, where the ungainly Medici doubles the parts of both his namesakes. Even the splendidly conceived Fire in the Borgo, which gives the hall its name—"it is not the Borgo that is burning, but Troy", for Raphael was a true son of the Renaissance—is said to be nearly all the work of pupils, of whom Giovanni Penni and Giulio

Romano were the ablest ; Raphael is thought to have supplied little more than the drawings.

Unquestionably Raphael's greatest works for Leo were the cartoons for the tapestries with which he wished to replace the old ones in the Sistine chapel. They were probably begun in 1514 and were woven at Brussels, whither the industry was transferred after Louis XI had taken Arras from Burgundy. When they were hung in position and displayed to the public in 1519 they aroused great enthusiasm, being declared to be the most beautiful that had ever been seen. Seven of the cartoons are, of course, at South Kensington, having been bought by Charles I.

Then there are the *loggie*, the three storeys of open arcades in the Vatican that run round the court of S. Damaso. The centre of these, which leads to the Stanze, is known by the name of Raphael. On Bramante's death he took charge of the building of it and to him was entrusted the decoration. The scheme covers the whole gallery, filling it with painting, carving and stucco-work, and the brilliancy and brightness of the whole, now sadly faded, is as typical of the Pope as the mingling of Christian and pagan ideas. The keynote of the ceiling decoration is formed by the Medici devices of the yoke and the diamond ring with the three coloured feathers. Here again Raphael supplied only the drawings, the execution being left to pupils. Giovanni da Udine did the stucco work. This remarkable collection of Scripture pictures is called Raphael's Bible. Who that has seen them will forget even the festoons of fruit and flowers on their blue ground over the windows ? But as the *loggie* were open to the weather till comparatively recently, the decorations have suffered considerably from exposure. Leo's name is everywhere and the musical instruments, with the animals he loved to slaughter, and the elephant, recall his tastes.

In spite of all he did for the Pope, Raphael found time to execute commissions for other patrons,

notably for Chigi, who was intimate with all the artists and men of letters in Rome. They frequently gathered in the gardens of the Farnesina. This beautiful villa, which owes its name to the fact that it later passed into the hands of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, soon to become Pope Paul III, is said to have been largely the work of Baldassare Peruzzi, a Sienese, like Chigi, and was virtually finished before Raphael came to Rome. Here Raphael painted his delightful Galatea, upon which Baldassare Castiglione heartily congratulated him, and also designed the charming Cupid and Psyche series, which was executed by his pupils. And it was for the Chigi chapel in S. Maria della Pace that he did his Sybils, some of his very best work, which Vasari considered to be the most perfect frescoes ever painted. The story goes that, when a quarrel arose about the price with Chigi's steward, Michelangelo, who was called in to arbitrate, generously declared that each of the heads of his rival was worth a hundred ducats. Naturally, Raphael was beset by commissions. It was for Pucci that he painted his Santa Cecilia in Bologna. Another Florentine banker was Bindo Altoviti, whose house on the Tiber, near the Ponte S. Angelo, was till recently a Roman landmark. Raphael painted his portrait and it is to him that we owe the Madonna dell'Impruneta. Altoviti, who had married a niece of Innocent VIII, was a noted art patron, even for that time, and it was to him that Michelangelo gave the cartoons of his Sistine frescoes.

When his fellow-countryman, Bramante, died, the work of architect of S. Peter's was added to Raphael's other labours. The Pope, as he puts it, while conferring an honour upon him which he much appreciated, had also laid a heavy burden on him. Leo had daily talks with him about the work. The Pope destined 60,000 ducats a year for it, but he soon found it impossible to spare the money. There was widespread opposition to the sale of indulgences for the

purpose. Even Cardinal Ximenes protested from Spain, while Venice would not allow the bull to be published in her territories. Hence little progress was made under Raphael, who, writes an ambassador in 1519, had suffered much from depression since he had succeeded Bramante as architect.

To the early years of Leo belongs the Sistine Madonna. For Cardinal Giulio he designed the delightful Villa Madama, which he was building for himself on Monte Mario, though the plans were subsequently much altered. It was also Giulio who commissioned the Transfiguration, the picture upon which he was at work at the time of his death, for the cathedral of Narbonne, of which Giulio was bishop.

A feature of Leo's day, which he did his best to encourage, was the growth in the knowledge and exploration of ancient Rome, a work in which Andrea Fulvio, a man of great learning, did yeoman service. Mario Calvo, who translated Vitruvius for Raphael, Fulvio and Castiglione, who was generally in Rome on diplomatic business, used to wander among the ruins with Raphael. The result of these archaeological walks was the document on the antiquities of Rome, probably written by Castiglione, though the ideas were largely Raphael's, which was presented to Leo. It denounces the destructive vandalism of his predecessors in detail and points out the number of buildings that have been ruthlessly destroyed for lime or building materials in his own day "with a barbarism which disgraces our age and which Hannibal could not have surpassed". The Pope is urged to protect what is left as a witness to the genius "of those sublime minds, the very thought of which fires the living to higher things". With the help of these friends Raphael began his plan of ancient Rome, which appears to have awakened more enthusiasm in the intellectual world than his pictures, so that "he is considered to be something more than mortal, sent

down from Heaven to give back to the Eternal City its lost glory".

Artists still ranked as workmen and their manners were often proportionately rough and uncouth. Leo treated his scholars and poetasters with much greater regard, even on his hunting expeditions, for they were looked upon as the chief bestowers of fame. Thus the letter describing Raphael's death to the Marchesa of Mantua says that his fame will be eternal, thanks to his work and to the scholars who will praise him. No artist, not even Raphael, was ever invited to the Papal court. Their place was in the second dining-room with the grooms, chamberlains and other household officials.

Yet Raphael had an almost unique position in Rome. In charm of manner and courtly bearing—a charm which his pictures radiate—he rivalled the most popular men of his day, Bembo, Bibbiena or Castiglione, who delighted to have him in their company and were proud to rank him among their friends. One thinks of Bembo revisiting Tivoli after twenty-seven years with Raphael and Castiglione and that attractive scholar, Navagero, who was anxious to see it before returning home to Venice. Bibbiena, the influential Cardinal S. Maria in Portico, whose portrait Raphael painted, long pressed him to marry one of his relatives and he ended by promising so to do. He is not enthusiastic, though he tells his uncle that he must keep his word; indeed, he put off the marriage from year to year till the hapless Maria died of grief. She lies near him in the Pantheon, the inscription having been placed over her by Raphael's wish expressed on his death-bed. Vasari's story that he delayed because Leo had promised him a red hat instead of the large sums he could never pay him is very improbable.

Raphael's wealth increased rapidly and he lived "not like an artist, but like a prince". He owned a noble palace in the Borgo Nuovo, then a popular

neighbourhood, as the wealthy cardinals liked to live close to the Vatican. He bought it from Bramante, who had built it. At the time of his death he was preparing to build another in the fashionable Via Giulia, having taken out a perpetual lease for the ground from the canons of S. Peter's.

If Raphael shrank from marriage with "the beautiful and dignified" Maria, he was artist enough to be happy with the lovely peasant girl Margherita, the Fornarina, for there is considerable evidence that she was a baker's daughter. She certainly often sat as his model, probably for the Sistine Madonna, and is said to be the *Donna Velata* of the Pitti. Yet in the end he showed himself a better Catholic than lover. It is typical of the varied work expected of a great Renaissance artist that his last recorded job is his promise to the envoy from Ferrara to send drawings to show how the Duke's chimneys might be prevented from smoking. To the consternation of all Rome he was suddenly seized with a violent fever. When he was known to be dying, the Pope, who had enquired after him some half a dozen times, sent him his blessing. This he could not receive while Margherita was with him. Not only did he not marry her, as many men did their mistresses on their death-beds, but he allowed her to be dragged shrieking from the room, though he bequeathed her a sufficient sum to keep her from want. He died on April 6th, Good Friday, the anniversary of his birthday, 1520, at the age of thirty-seven. It was widely believed that the ominous cracks appearing in the *loggia*, so that the Pope had to move to the apartments of Cardinal Cibo, were a supernatural warning of the approaching death of this great artist, than whom none had ever been more loved in Rome. The Transfiguration was placed by the bed where he lay in state in his studio. He was buried, as he had wished, in the Pantheon, the Pope bearing the cost of the splendid funeral.

Raphael dominated the art of his day so completely in the Pope's eyes that all other artists were thrust into the shade. Leonardo da Vinci was assigned a room in the Belvedere when he came to Rome with Giuliano and is said to have been given a commission, but he was, as usual, far too interested in his experiments to execute it. On the death of Giuliano he entered the service of Francis I. Nor were Sodoma and Luca Signorelli more fortunate in securing work from the Pope. Michelangelo was hardly in Rome at all. As he was the same age as Leo and they had been boys together in the Medici palace, it has been said that his manners, which had not prevented him from getting on with his rough, peasant predecessor, made him unpopular with Leo. In an interesting interview, which Michelangelo's pupil Sebastiano del Piombo describes to him, just after Raphael's death, Leo said : "Look at Raphael's pictures. As soon as he saw Michelangelo's, he dropped the style of Perugino and followed Michelangelo as closely as he could ; but he is a terrible fellow [it is difficult to give the exact meaning of the Italian *terribile*] and impossible to get on with."

Yet the facts hardly bear this out. Michelangelo voluntarily gave up the monument to Julius II in order to return to Florence and build the façade of S. Lorenzo. It was his own wrong-headedness that drove him to spend years searching for perfect marble instead of submitting a design of the façade for which the Pope was pressing, so that at last Cardinal Giulio cancelled the contract. It was the artist, not the Pope, who bore the grudge. As Sebastiano tells him in his letter, Leo spoke of him with the affection of a brother and with warm appreciation, "but it is you who alarm the Pope". And with the project for the new sacristy at S. Lorenzo and the four Medici tombs—those to Lorenzo il Magnifico and his brother Giuliano were never executed—all ill-feeling disappeared. But the peculiar tone of the letter in which he recommends

Sebastiano del Piombo, his pupil, for a share in the work at the Vatican after the death of Raphael suggests that he may have been conscious of his uncouthness ; or is it merely a relic of the old boyhood familiarity ?¹ In any case sculpture owes little to Leo. But the best statue of his day is Michelangelo's Christ with the Cross in S. Maria sopra Minerva.

Leo was particularly fond of jewellery, cameos and the lesser arts in general. Such a taste is natural in a man with his poor sight. The beautiful bell and the illuminated book with the hand-glass which Raphael has placed in front of him in the well-known portrait, where he appears between Cardinal Rossi and his cousin Giulio, have a symbolical significance ; indeed, they almost symbolize the coming of the new era, when Benvenuto Cellini was among the leading figures in the world of art. Only on music did he spend more than on jewellery. At his death the Papal jewels were valued at 204,655 ducats, not a few of the stones having been added by Leo, in spite of the bad times. He also had the Medici taste for and understanding of medals and coins. The beautiful carving and intarsia work, the delicate mouldings and the whole scheme of decoration of the *loggia* suggest his delight in carefully finished work on a small scale. Nor are Raphael's tapestries an isolated phenomenon, for Leo loved the rich silks, brocades and velvets of the Renaissance as none of his predecessors had done, leaving a valuable collection behind him at his death. Lorenzo's letter shows how well he understood his son's weaknesses.

¹ Pastor, *Papæ*, VIII, 345.

CHAPTER XXIII

FRANCIS I AND CHARLES V. LUTHER. THE DEATH OF
LEO X
(1518-21)

SUCH was the man who occupied the Chair of S. Peter when the two great events occurred in Europe which may almost be said to usher in the modern world, the revolt of Luther and the election of Charles V as Emperor. In his attitude towards the imperial election the Pope's diplomacy appears at its most characteristic, possibly at its best, with his ceaseless activity, his suppleness, his unscrupulousness, his clear grasp of essentials. He stands out as a typical Italian of the Cinquecento. Though he liked to pass on as much of the dull routine business as possible to Giulio, in all matters of importance it was he who led. His cousin was merely his confidential adviser. But the care with which he covered up his tracks makes it difficult to follow his movements. Some years after his death the able and experienced Cardinal Aleander wrote that he had never seen a prince or a man more secretive in negotiating.

The election was the prologue to the long struggle between Francis and Charles, the brilliant, powerfully built, handsome young king of France, the living embodiment, both in his good and his bad sides, of the Renaissance of his country, and the more serious, scrupulous and reflective, level-headed and tenacious Charles : too delicate to possess the exuberant vitality of his rival, he had in him much of the burgher of the Low Countries, where he had been brought up. On the death of his father Charles had inherited his Spanish dominions and was now the heir through his grandfather, the Emperor Maximilian, to all the

Hapsburg possessions. Maximilian naturally wished him also to inherit the empire, and the news that he was preparing to get his grandson chosen King of the Romans was anything but welcome to the Pope. By a bull of Clement IV the crown of Naples should lapse to the Holy See if its king were elected King of the Romans, but Leo knew that Charles would never cede it. He told Bibbiena, now his minister in France, that, if Francis would support him, he would oppose the election. But when Francis urged him to show himself a lion in deed as well as in name and join a league against the Hapsburgs, he began his usual double dealing, for Charles had pleased him by accepting his five years' truce in preparation for a crusade.

Of the rivals, Leo may well have thought Charles the less formidable. He was still an unknown quantity and his scattered dominions, which had neither the cohesion nor the wealth of France, would be more difficult to govern. When Maximilian also agreed to the truce, Leo began to talk of allowing him to be crowned in Germany, for until he was crowned Emperor, it was not legally possible for Charles to be King of the Romans, since technically that was Maximilian's own title. Francis now made concessions, but the Pope continued to flatter the hopes of both parties without committing himself. Though his chief aim was to keep the Papacy and Italy independent, he had an eye on the advancement of the Medici. When he granted Francis the Crusading tenth for his own use, Lorenzo received a commission of 100,000 ducats and they guaranteed each other's possessions. True to principle, he also entered into a secret treaty with Charles, who was induced to believe that the Pope would support him. It was the policy of the weak, the policy of the whole of divided Italy at that time, but the Pope thus insured himself as securely as it was possible for him to do with the tricky diplomacy of the day.

When in January, 1519, Maximilian died, the Pope's private secretary, the Florentine, Pietro Ardinghelli, wrote to Bibbiena that God in His mercy, by taking the Emperor to Himself, had delivered His Holiness from the great anxiety, trouble and danger caused by having to give a decision about the despatch of the Imperial crown. The prospect of preventing the election of Charles now appeared more promising. The danger would impress others, as it did him. He would have preferred a neutral candidate to Francis. He even suggested that Henry VIII might stand, but Wolsey disapproved and it was soon clear that he would not have a chance. He at once decided that he would have none of Charles. The fact that Giulio was in Florence with the dying Lorenzo shows that he made the decision himself. Still, he dreaded an understanding between the rivals, which would leave him at their mercy, and it was to prevent this that he threw all his weight into the scale of Francis, even offering red hats to the electors of Cologne and Treves and the Legateship of Germany to the Cardinal Archbishop of Mainz. But when he authorized his Legate, should three electors vote for Francis, to declare him elected, such Papal interference outraged German national feeling.

Soon, however, it became clear that Francis had no chance and Leo saw that the election of Charles in the teeth of his opposition would be a deadly blow to the prestige of the Papacy. He must not run his head against a stone wall, he said, and the death of Lorenzo made a change of front less difficult. Lorenzo was more French than the French and almost his last words had been a prayer that Francis might be elected. There was great excitement in Rome and betting was brisk. Leo had consented to Charles keeping Naples, in spite of the bull of Clement IV, but he would veto any extension of his power in North Italy. When Charles was elected on June 28th, there was great rejoicing among the Spaniards and

their allies in Rome, the Colonna. The Salviati and many of the cardinals had all along favoured Charles, notably the Pope's sister, Lucrezia.

The Germans were much displeased at the result being regarded as a Spanish triumph and their displeasure is symptomatic. The election of Charles to the Imperial crown ushered in the period of Spanish domination in Europe, which was to be as strong in the Church as in politics. Leo's remarks to the Venetian ambassador show that the result filled him with anxiety and at once there was noted an increase in Spanish insolence. Nor was Leo's position to be envied, placed as he was between the haughty Spaniards and the sulky French. Nothing roused him like a slight to the Holy See and we read of him turning *tutto irato e con volto terribile* upon the Spanish ambassador for his high-handed conduct, with which later Popes were to become only too familiar, in allowing a Roman subject to be carried off to Naples, when there was danger of his winning a suit.

The other and far more serious question with which Leo was faced was the beginning of the Reformation. Like all Italians of his day, except the very few who were thoroughly familiar with Germany, he was incapable of understanding its gravity ; indeed, in its early stages it was thrown completely into the shade in his eyes by the imperial election. The breach was inevitable. The movement in Germany was as much national and social, centering largely in the lesser nobility and the middle classes, as religious and moral.

The revival of the national spirit, thanks in some measure to the romantic Emperor Maximilian, helped to rouse the old Ghibelline opposition to Rome. It is unfair to throw the blame on Leo, though he was certainly not the man even to understand the importance of the crisis, much less to tackle it successfully. The Germans had long been deeply disgusted with the scandalous corruption of the Roman court. Luther's visit to Rome, which called from him the remark that

a thousand ducats was not too much to pay for a sight of its rottenness, took place under Julius II. On the other hand, the unpopularity and contempt with which the Romans regarded Leo's successor, the dull, pious, wholly admirable Dutch monk and scholar, Adrian VI, shows how utterly unreconcilable were the views of North and South.

The details are outside the scope of this volume. The only indulgences of his predecessors which Leo did not revoke were those which were to provide funds for the building of S. Peter's and among them were indulgences for souls in Purgatory. These were notoriously issued in order to get money out of simple souls and Germany had long been the best market for their sale, upon which the local priests also made a good profit. Already this shameless traffic was rousing the strongest feeling against Rome, which the German Humanists, of whom Ulrich von Hutten was the most prominent, were steadily fanning. The Roman Curia was too accustomed to German outbursts against its rapacity to take alarm. The one Italian of note who realized the seriousness of the situation was Aleander, who knew Germany well and was fond of the country. In 1516 he had warned Leo of the danger of a revolt and in later years, when he was in the thick of the fight in Germany, he urged him again and again to reform his court as the only way to stem the tide. In 1517, at the last session of the Lateran Council, in the presence of the Pope himself, Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola drew a picture of the moral state of the Church as lurid as any Northern reformer could have given and urged that the priests at least should be made to behave with ordinary decency. There were good Catholics in Italy like the Florentine chronicler Bartolomeo Cerretani who looked to Luther as the one hope of reforming the Church. Guicciardini, who was in Papal service, wrote that he would have loved Luther more than himself, hoping that his sect would

overthrow or cripple "the godless tyranny of the priests". Machiavelli held even stronger views.¹ Yet Leo was incapable of understanding the need of reform, much less of effecting it, a task which would then have been beyond the powers even of a really strong Pope like Julius II.

Luther fired the train, but it required a warning letter from the Emperor Maximilian to make the Pope order his legate, Cardinal Cajetan (so called because he came from Gaeta) to send for him. The crisis began with the refusal of the Elector of Saxony to surrender Luther, who had fled from the Diet of Augsburg after refusing to recant to Cajetan. The imperial election momentarily shelved the question; especially when Leo was supporting the candidature of the Elector of Saxony. Luther's trial was not undertaken in earnest before the return of Giulio from Florence in 1519. Doubtless it was he who made Leo face the unpalatable task. But in 1520 Luther went into open revolt, refusing to acknowledge Papal authority. The publishing of the bull against him had little effect and in January, 1521, he was excommunicated. Nine-tenths of Germany, said Aleander, supported Luther, while the other tenth bitterly hated the Roman Curia, as the Catholic Duke George of Saxony showed at the Diet of Worms. In such an atmosphere Charles V felt bound to act with caution and he gave Luther a safe-conduct to the Diet; but when he absolutely refused to recant, he was compelled to leave Worms.

In September, 1521, the English envoy presented the Pope with Henry VIII's *Defence of the Seven Sacraments against Luther*, which Leo began to devour eagerly at once, after his wont, even refusing to let Clerk read him the dedication, which was in small print. In October Leo bestowed upon the King of England, in spite of the opposition of several cardinals, the title of Defender of the Faith, which still appears upon our coins.

¹ For others, see Pastor, *Pope*, VIII, 180 ff.

The coming struggle between the Emperor and the King of France made the Pope's position difficult in the extreme. Charles, with his apparently overwhelming power, seemed a standing menace to the liberties of Italy and the Papacy, so he turned to Francis. There must be a league against the Emperor. But England naturally preferred Charles to Francis and both France and Venice blew cold, largely because of Leo's designs upon Ferrara. Venice preferred the d'Este as neighbours to a powerful Pope and Ferrara had always been loyal to France. Though in the autumn of 1519 Francis and Leo made a defensive alliance, Leo, true to his principles, continued to treat with Charles.

The exiles, supported by the Pope, failed in their attempt upon Ferrara, but he continued to weed out the petty tyrants of Romagna. His most important success was against Giampolo Baglioni of Perugia, the only one of his condottieri who had been too wily to walk into Cesare Borgia's trap at Sinigaglia. He had consistently defied the Pope and his methods of government were no better than those of his neighbours. Leo summoned him to Rome to justify a massacre he had recently perpetrated, whereupon he sent his son to find out how the land lay. The Pope is said to have overcome his suspicions only by giving him a safe-conduct, guaranteed by his son-in-law, Camillo Orsini, though the evidence for this is doubtful. He entered Rome in great splendour, but when he went to his audience with the Pope in the Castel S. Angelo he was arrested and in due course tried and executed. He died penitent, admitting that he deserved his fate. He whiled away his time in prison by having Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* read to him.

Meanwhile Francis I was causing the Pope serious annoyance. Bibbiena, who was popular with the king, had, like most of the Italians who visited the French court, succumbed to its glamour—"as much a Frenchman as I am a Spaniard", wrote a Spanish

ambassador; and so were many of the cardinals in Rome, thanks to the French king's lavish bribes. Bibbiena managed to patch up the breach caused by the king's foolish demand to act as guardian to Caterina dei Medici. Leo was much annoyed when he found that Francis was playing his own game and had no intention of helping him against Ferrara. The revolt in Spain against Charles made Francis still more bold, in spite of the warnings of Bibbiena. Not only did he persist in objecting to a red hat being given to the Bishop of Liège, Eberhard de la Mark, as demanded by Charles, but when Leo promised in Consistory that the hat should not be given without his consent, he declared that the mere mention of the matter in such a place was a personal insult. Cardinal Giulio wrote that he had never seen the Pope so angry. Leo did not show his hand even now, but he was resolved to turn to Charles rather than put up with such treatment.

The carnival of 1520 was as gay as ever. Plays were given before His Holiness with the usual *Moresche*, ballet interludes, between the acts. There were the bull fights and the cartloads of pigs shot down Monte Testaccio for the crowd to hack to pieces. Leo also had some pigs let loose opposite the Castel S. Angelo so that he could enjoy the sight of the sport. Then there were the usual races of boys, Jews and old men, all running naked, asses and above all the *palio* of the bare-back horses down the Corso. A novelty was a battle with oranges between the Pope's grooms and his footmen in front of the castle, the former in blue and white silk, the latter in red and yellow. So much did the Pope enjoy it that he had it repeated on the following day outside S. Peter's. The procession of carts on Shrove Tuesday from the Piazza Navona to S. Peter's, with the camels, a recent gift to the Pope, was particularly brilliant. It was in this year that Leo insisted on Giovanni delle Bande Nere giving a repetition of a splendid

tournament in which he had performed prodigies of valour. Giovanni also accompanied him on his round of autumn hunting expeditions.

But death was busy among the Pope's circle. Raphael died on April 6th, Chigi four days later. The magnificence of the funeral of the great millionaire was typical of the changing times. The body, clad in black silk with slippers of black velvet, was borne on a gilded car and covered by a huge pall of cloth of gold. All the clergy were there with wax tapers; there were two hundred torches of red wax and a great company of Sienese dressed in white. Bibbiena had also returned to Rome, stricken with mortal illness. He lingered till November, dying while Leo was on the hunting expedition described by Postumo. Relations had become strained between the Pope and his old friend, owing to his pro-French proclivities and also, it is said, to his ambition, and there was the usual absurd rumour that he had been poisoned. Ariosto says in a satire that he would have been wiser to stay at Tours. But they are disproved by the accounts of the progress of his illness in the letters of ambassadors. Possibly Leo had learnt to do without him, but, as the humanist Valeriano puts it in his elegy on Bibbiena, addressed to the Pope, his wit and gaiety could always cheer Leo when he was worried or depressed. To him had been deputed the task, scarcely a month before his own death, of breaking the news of the death of his beloved young wife to Baldassare Castiglione and in his will he did not forget his friend, leaving him a Madonna by Raphael which Castiglione valued highly. Bembo, too, now left Rome, nominally on account of his health. He was disappointed at not receiving the cardinal's hat which he considered his due, and his official duties, of which he had grown tired, took up too much of his time. The deaths of so many of his best friends may also have influenced him. He was now to settle in his villa near Padua with his collections of

books, manuscripts and works of art, devoting himself to scholarship and gardening.

Charles, meanwhile, had sent Don Juan Manuel, one of his ablest diplomatists, to Rome. He was received with the utmost respect and invited to be the guest of Cardinal Giulio, who now inhabited the Cancelleria. Owing to his eternal want of pence and to trouble with his subjects the Emperor was proving much less formidable than had been expected. The Pope continued to temporize, playing his usual game of keeping in with both sides, until he felt sure of Charles, whom he was better able to influence while he had not broken with Francis. But his mind was made up. Though naturally slow and hesitating, he could act with energy and decision in a crisis. His amusements in no way impeded his judgment or weakened his resolution in the intricate political questions he had to handle. From now on Nitti considers Leo, not Wolsey, to have been the driving force in European politics. In order to convince Don Manuel of his sincerity he actually offered to let him conceal a person of confidence under the bed during his interview with the new French ambassador. Manuel had already advised his master, if he went to Germany, to show favour to a certain Friar Martin, who was protected by the Duke of Saxony, since the Pope was very much afraid of him because he spoke and preached great things against him: if he did so, it might be easier to bring him to book.

The conditions proposed by Francis were not calculated to propitiate the Pope. Neither party had any intention of being bound by the treaty, to which the Pope at last agreed, each being sure that he was being deceived by the other. Leo pointed out to Manuel that Charles had a chance of making himself absolutely secure and rising to even greater heights by attacking France, but that his dilatoriness spoiled everything. Also he gave Saint-Marceau a written declaration that he had signed no agreement

contrary to the interests of his master during the last three months, nor would he do so in the next three. The Pope's position between two such formidable grindstones may palliate these double dealings, but they are unsurpassed even in the treacherous Renaissance.

By the beginning of 1521 Luther was the chief problem for the Pope. He was deeply incensed when the Emperor gave him a safe-conduct in honourable terms. At first he concealed his feelings, but when news of Luther's reception reached him, he spoke so vigorously to Manuel that he told Charles that he could expect nothing from Leo till he had satisfied him about Luther. However, Charles made amends by his later conduct. The Pope wished the alliance to be both offensive and defensive, but even so he hesitated to sign the treaty. In April, 1521, he hoped to have 6,000 Swiss in Rome and he appealed not only to Spain and England, but even to France for a contribution towards their upkeep, since they were for his own protection. Without Francis's permission they could not march through Lombardy. He was also troubled by the alliance of the French king with the Swiss and Francis began to dangle before him possible assistance in an attack upon Ferrara. Further, there was the Emperor's empty purse. But when he heard that Francis was talking of an alliance with Ferrara and that the Governor of Milan had said that he would leave nothing of him but his ears—a popular expression at that time—he signed. Charles was to be invested with Naples, the Pope to receive Parma, Piacenza and Modena, while the Medici were to be maintained in Florence. Charles was also pledged to defend the Church against her foes. The treaty was signed on May 8th, 1521, the day on which Luther was placed under the ban of the Empire. In the same month, almost as soon as hostilities began, Ignatius Loyola received the wound near Pampeluna which ended his soldiering and set him free to enter upon

the career which resulted in the foundation of the Society of Jesus. The movement which gave birth to the Oratory of Divine Love also dates from the days of Leo. Thus some of the most important seeds from which the Counter-Reformation sprang were being sown at the very moment when the Reformation was beginning in Germany.

The alliance was a triumph for the Pope. Wolsey was now compelled to abandon his peace policy and join the Emperor against France. After a decent refusal Cardinal Giulio accepted 10,000 ducats and some valuable preferment from Charles for his pains.

Francis took advantage of the Emperor's difficulties to begin hostilities in the North and fighting occurred near the frontier. The efforts of the Spaniards against Ferrara and Genoa failed, but, as the Governor of Reggio, the historian Guicciardini, proudly records, he thwarted the threatened French attack upon the place. Leo now felt justified in showing his colours, saying that, after the Emperor's behaviour at Worms, he was allying himself with him in self-defence. In a fit of enthusiasm he told Giulio, who repeated it to Guicciardini after his death, that the French were to be driven out of Italy, after which he meant to expel the Spaniards from Naples.

Not that Leo was at his ease. With his anxious temperament, he was tormented by dread lest Charles, whom he judged by himself, might throw him over and come to terms with Francis. But an autograph letter from the Emperor, pledging his word not to betray him, reassured him somewhat and he was soon declaring that he would pawn his tiara, as he ended by doing and as he had already done his silver, to raise funds. In September he burnt his boats by excommunicating Francis, among the many charges brought against him being his retention of Parma and Piacenza.

A fresh batch of famous men began to come to the fore in the war that followed. Francesco d'Avalos, Marquis of Pescara, the husband of Vittoria Colonna,

was general of the infantry in the Imperial army, which was led by Prospero Colonna, while Giovanni delle Bande Nere commanded the light cavalry of the Papal forces, of which Guicciardini was Commissary.

Things did not go well at the front, owing largely to the suspicions and jealousies between Pescara and Prospero Colonna. However, the energetic Cardinal Schinner, himself a Swiss, succeeded in raising a formidable force of Swiss in the cantons, in spite of their alliance with Francis, while Giulio's tact smoothed over the trouble between the commanders. More important still, Giulio brought money with him, sorely against his will, for most of it had been saved in Florence by his own careful administration and kept in reserve. Nor had he any liking for the post of Legate. But the importance of his presence was great, since he was known to be the Pope's *alter ego*.

At length Schinner succeeded in overcoming the scruples of his countrymen against fighting their ally, the King of France. Guicciardini was scandalized to see the two cardinals, with their silver crosses, among the cursing, murderous, plundering soldiery that made up the army of the Papacy and the Empire. The Pope was following the war, most of the expense for which fell upon himself, with feverish excitement and interest: "if possible, he would like to have hourly bulletins": and the whole of Rome shared his anxiety.

The Swiss in French service turned the tide. When their pay was not forthcoming, they refused to fight against their countrymen and the French were forced to abandon Milan. To no one did the allies owe their success more than to Giovanni delle Bande Nere. The greatest personal feat of the campaign was his swimming the Adda, lance in rest, on his white Arab, Soldano, at the head of two hundred of his admirably trained light horse, thus turning Lautrec's position. His men, too, were the first to enter Milan by the sluices for draining the water. Soon afterwards it was



Photograph, Alinari

Giovanni Delle Bande Nere, by Titian
Uffizi, Florence

only his enormous strength that saved his life when his horse fell upon him, pinning him down in one of the irrigation canals of the Lombard plain, while he was pursuing the flying enemy.

Neither the war, nor the seriousness of the situation, damped the gaiety of the carnival or the spirits of the Pope. The fact is, wrote Castiglione, the Pope is so absorbed in amusements that it is impossible to get any business done. He was at the Castel S. Angelo, where, on the last day of carnival, a charming *Moresca* was performed by eight young Sienese, attended by fifty servants in satin doublets and stockings of the device of their company, who held the huge torches which lighted the show, for it was given at dusk. They began by setting up a light satin tent in the castle yard, from which the players issued. The Pope and his guests looked on from the windows. The speeches were in *ottava rima*. First a woman came out of the tent and prayed Venus to give her a worthy lover. Then appeared eight hermits in grey gowns. Seeing Cupid, they robbed him of his bow and executed a graceful dance, striking him with their staves, while he defended himself with his quiver. He also appeals to Venus, who comes out and gives the woman a sleeping-potion for the hermits. Cupid wakes them with his arrows, they dance round him, proclaiming their love for the woman, cast off their gowns and appear as handsome youths. Then they execute a *Moresca*, since she has bidden them show their prowess, in which they fight till only one survives, who becomes the woman's lover. It is a *Moresca* such as any Renaissance Pope might have enjoyed and, though it may be a strangely ironical ending to the last carnival which the Pope who was called upon to face the dawn of the Reformation was to witness, Pastor is surely too severe in saying it would be incredible, had it not been related by a witness as trustworthy as Castiglione. Hardly an Italian in Rome would have seen anything unusual in it. After a comedy given by Cardinal

Cibo in his apartments, the Pope had supped there with the cardinals and the ladies present. Castiglione sums up this season by saying that the scenery and stage effects were excellent, the comedies not good, the acting poor. Thus already the scenery is beginning to take the first place, as one would expect in a period of display like the Renaissance. He thought the *Moresca* the best show of the carnival.

In November, having been unwell, the Pope went to La Magliana, whither the messenger hastened with the news of the fall of Milan, which had reached Rome on the 24th. The Pope, who was saying Lauds, had reached the passage : "that, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we may serve him without fear." He was overjoyed and at once sent orders that the victory was to be celebrated as it deserved. Seated by the window, he watched the doings of his Swiss guards, who continued to let off fireworks, fire guns and play music in honour of this revenge, as they regarded it, for Marignano till very late at night, and he appears to have caught a chill. Next day he returned to Rome and Clerk wrote to Wolsey, who had now been compelled to ally himself with Leo and Charles, "methought I never saw him more lusty". As a matter of fact, he had felt so chilled on the way that he had actually walked part of it. But he was beaming with pleasure at the enthusiastic welcome he received, saying that the taking of Milan had given him more joy than his election to the Papacy. He ate and slept well, but next day was seized with a shivering fit during an audience and went to bed. His chill developed rapidly into bronchitis and then into bronchial pneumonia, as Pieraccini makes clear from the symptoms, a malady which, with his corpulence, he was the last person to be able to resist. He felt so ill that he made a general confession. But next day, the 30th, he was well enough to despatch a few briefs and enjoy some music. On December 1st, after a bad night, he was again better and heard the good news of

the capture of Piacenza, following rapidly on that of Parma, his objects in making the war ; indeed, he once told Giulio that he would give his life to win them. Late that night he felt so ill that he knew he was dying, but he was too weak to receive the Viaticum and he soon became unconscious. The story that Fra Mariano alone was with him at the end—he might well have been in worse company—and that he died without receiving the last rites of the Church rests on very poor authority. It is just the kind of story that the Romans would, perhaps not unfairly, fasten upon Leo. His sister, Lucrezia Salviati, and Serapica, who were about him at the end, are said to have carried off everything of value to prevent its being plundered, but the inventory made for the cardinals after his death shows that the report was an exaggeration.

Leo's sudden death at the age of forty-six was a great shock to Rome and there was the usual rumour of poison. "This is nearly always said of great men, especially when they die of acute disease," remarks Vettori, and Clerk talks contemptuously of "all this skimble-skamble stuff". Pieraccini points out that the symptoms reported when the body was opened are exactly such as would be expected in one who had died of bronchial pneumonia ; yet all the doctors, except the Pope's private physician, shook their heads and talked of poison. The Pope's cup-bearer was imprisoned on suspicion, but Giulio released him the moment he reached Rome, rumour saying from fear that he might cause trouble by implicating Francis I. Vettori thinks it a marvel that, with his health and his foolish régime, now over-eating, now fasting, Leo had lived so long.

Leo fared no better than many of his predecessors at his funeral in S. Peter's. The Treasury was empty, there was no money even to buy tapers and there was nothing for it but to use those which had just served for the funeral of Cardinal Riario, a strange contrast to the gorgeous obsequies of Agostino Chigi. It was

the Farnese Pope, Paul III, who built his tomb in S. Maria sopra Minerva, the Dominican church where his cousin, Giulio, Clement VII, is also buried. Near by lies Bembo, as a stone records in the pavement. Here, too, is the beautiful tomb of Francesco Tornabuoni, by Mino da Fiesole, and in front of the High Altar Michelangelo's Christ with the Cross. The heavy tombs of the Medici Popes were designed by Antonio di Sangallo.

Leo was even more lucky in the moment of his death than he had been in his life, for it was his successors who had to face the full effects of the disasters that date from his reign, the Reformation, the growth of the power of Spain and the financial troubles caused by his reckless extravagance. To his many creditors his unexpected death was disastrous. All his friends and all the great banking houses suffered, none more than the Strozzi, who were reduced to the verge of bankruptcy. Like his father, he owes not a little of his reputation to the black years that followed. Men looked wistfully back, especially after the sack of Rome, on the splendours of Leo's court, the last to govern a united Church, on days of prosperity that had gone for ever. Modern research has to a great extent whittled down the vaunted glory of the Leonine age, even invalidating the claims of Leo to give his name to it. Yet, when all is said, it would be difficult to find a figure better suited to stand for this last blossoming of the Renaissance in Rome. He was as truly representative of the waning, but still confident Renaissance of his day as his father, Lorenzo, had been of the earlier period. The passion for display was the weakness of this brilliant age, above all a display that should dazzle the eye, set against a classical background. "The late Renaissance sounded its cymbals, and the notes echoed back from the bas-reliefs of a newly-discovered triumphal arch." The eye, as Dr Praz well puts it, travelled down a vista of rotundas, colonnades, obelisks and

statues : "a colossal classicism in the Roman style, bejewelled in the taste of Alexandria, massive, polished, and at the same time variegated like rare marble, changing like opals and amethysts." Leo was pursued with a larger share of caustic and scurrilous epigrams than usually fell to the lot of a deceased Pope. Pasquinades were becoming the rage and the wits of Rome found him an excellent target. But this epigram, dating from the reign of Paul III, gives fitting expression to the feelings with which men learned to look back on his tenure of the See of St Peter,

Delitiae humani generis, Leo maxime, tecum,
Ut simul illusere, interiere simul.¹

¹ "No sooner had the joys of the human race risen with thee, mighty Leo, than with thee they set."

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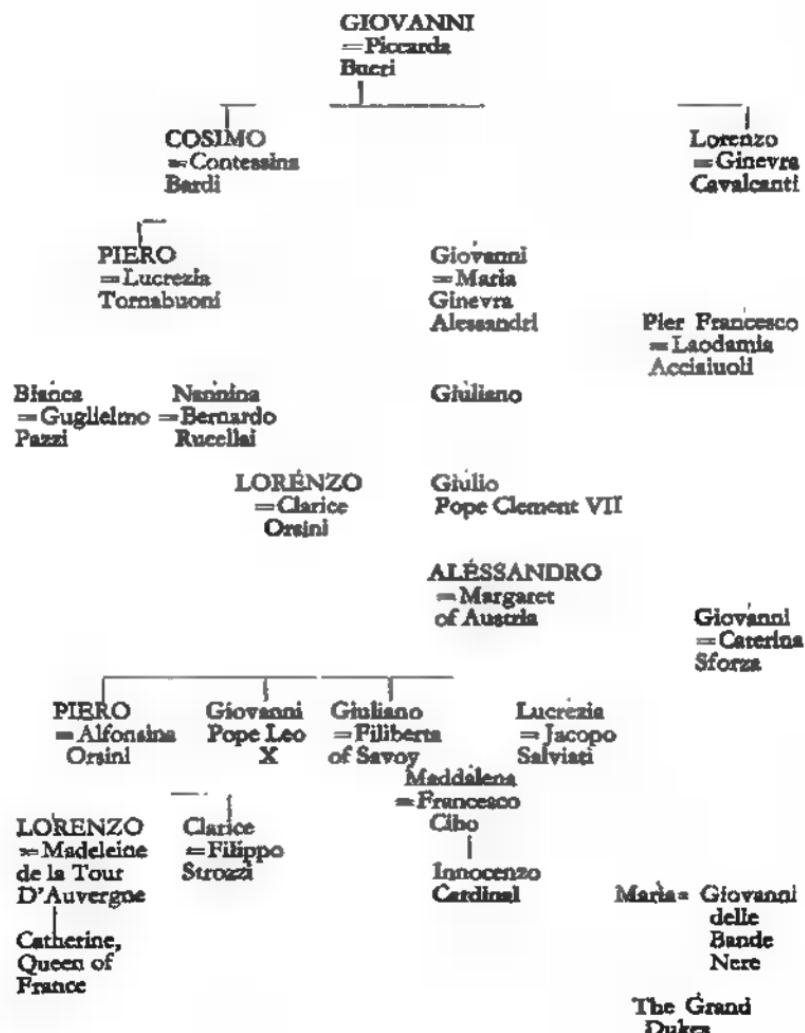
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SHORT GENEALOGY



INDEX

- Acciaiuoli, Agnolo, 24, 72, 78, 79
 Acciaiuoli, Donato, 143
 Accolti, Bernardo, 246, 276, 290, 296, 297
 Acunha, Tristan d', 264
 Adrian VI, 285, 328
 Alamanni, Pietro, 181
 Alberti, Leon Battista, 8, 70, 74, 94
 Albizzi, Masso degli, 5, 7
 Albizzi, Rinaldo degli, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 37, 46, 52
 Alexander, Cardinal, 324, 328, 329
 Alessandri, Ginevra degli, 64
 Alexander VI, 184, 196, 217, 220, 221, 223, 234, 236, 240, 273, 297
 Alfonso I, 56, 49, 50, 54
 Alfonso II, 73, 146, 151, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 159, 184, 214, 218, 220, 223, 226
 Alidosi, Cardinal, 251
 Altoviti, Bindo, 318
 Angelico, Fra, 34, 35, 262
 Anghiarì, Balduccio d', 47
 Anjou, René d', 72, 154, 149
 Antella, Lamberto, 235
 Antonino, S., 31, 59
 Appiano, Camillo d', of Piombino, 287
 Appiano, Jacopo d', 127, 150
 Aragona, Cardinal d', 280, 297, 303, 311
 Aragona, Federigo d', 73, 103, 152
 Aragona, Ferrantino d', 152
 Aragona, Isabella d', 179, 180
 Ardinghelli, Pietro, 85, 326
 Aretino, Pietro, 284, 297, 298, 303
 Argyropoulos, 88, 169
 Ariosto, Ludovico, 267, 280, 292, 311, 330, 332
 Baglioni, Giampolo, 330
 Baldovinetti, 156
 Bandini, Bernardo, 138, 139, 143, 147
 Baraballo, 257, 298, 300, 301
 Barbaro, Ermolao, 191
 Bardi, Contessina del, 19, 72
 Bartolomeo, Fra, 298
 Beocchi, Gentile, 87, 88, 90, 116, 161, 182, 207, 220, 222, 226
 Bembo, Pietro, 245, 246, 261, 267, 273, 276, 290, 292, 293, 294, 295, 320, 332, 340
 Benzi, Bartolomeo, 154, 190, 191
 Bentivoglio, Ercole, 76
 Bentivoglio, Giovanni, 232, 237, 251
 Beroaldo, Filippo, 246, 249, 294
 Besarion, Cardinal, 38, 39
 Bibbiena, Cardinal, 227, 241, 245, 246, 257, 258, 265, 275, 276, 284, 289, 293, 295, 297, 299, 303, 306, 311, 320, 323, 326, 330, 331, 332
 Bisticci, Vespasiano da, 31, 39, 41, 79
 Borgia, Cesare, 185, 242, 243, 350
 Boscoli, Pietro, 257
 Botticelli, Sandro, 34, 84, 89, 91, 108, 143, 156, 158, 171, 187, 239
 Bracciolini, Jacopo, 138, 140
 Bracciolini, Poggio, 43, 44, 45, 52, 298
 Bramante, 298, 318, 319, 321
 Brandino, 298, 302
 Brandolini, Raffaele, 296
 Brunelleschi, Filippo, 10, 11, 14, 30, 31, 34, 142
 Bruni, Leonardo d'Arezzo, 29, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45
 Buend, Piccarda, 13
 Buonarroti, M., see Michelangelo
 Burchhard, Johannes, 208
 Cajetan, Cardinal, 329
 Capponi, Agostino, 257, 258
 Capponi, Gino, 3
 Capponi, Neri, 18, 25, 46, 47, 55, 70
 Capponi, Piero, 222, 229, 234
 Cardona, Raimondo dc, 252, 254, 255
 Carvajal, Cardinal, 253, 264
 Castellesi, Adriano, 282, 285

- Castiglione, Baldassare, 245, 246, 250, 274, 275, 280, 292, 293, 316, 318, 319, 320, 332, 337, 338
 Cattanei, Simonetta d^r, 91, 100, 108, 109, 131, 132, 170
 Cavalcanti, G., 11, 12, 21, 25, 26, 48
 Cellini, Benvenuto, 284
 Cerretani, Bartolomeo, 328
 Charles V, Emperor, 324, 325, 326, 327, 329, 330, 331, 333, 334, 335, 336, 338
 Charles VII of France, 55
 Charles VIII of France, 214, 220, 221, 222, 224, 225, 226, 227, 229, 230, 233, 234, 235, 236, 248, 263, 273
 Chigi, Agostino, 248, 249, 250, 261, 283, 295, 301, 302, 313, 318, 332
 Chrysoloras, 29
 Cibo, Francesco, 89, 161, 173, 176, 177, 178, 179, 181, 203, 207, 239
 Cibo, Innocenzo, 265, 302, 338
 Colleoni, Bartolomeo, 76, 80
 Colonna, Prospero, 336
 Colonna, Vittoria, 335
 Colucci, Angelo, 290, 291
 Commines, Philippe de, 147, 150, 186, 187, 225, 231, 235, 240
 Cordova, Gonzalvo de, 243
 Comaro, Cardinal, 297
 Credi, Lorenzo d^r, 187, 239
 Donatello, 9, 10, 32, 33, 34, 82
 Donati, Lucrezia, 84, 109, 111
 Dovizi, Bernardo, *ss* Bibbiena
 Dovizi, Piero, 188, 208, 218, 226, 227
 Equicols, Mario, 293
 Erasmus, 290, 295
 Este, Alfonso d^r, 260, 321
 Este, Borso d^r, 23, 76, 77, 111
 Este, Ercole d^r, 128, 147, 149, 155, 159
 Este, Ippolito d^r, 207, 280, 304
 Este, Isabella d^r, 154, 157, 275, 276, 297, 303, 304, 308, 311, 320
 Eugenius IV, 11, 25, 26, 30, 31, 32, 37, 38, 39, 42, 52
 Fals' Amico, 110, 111
 Farnese, Cardinal, 304, 318, 340, 341
 Ferrante, King, 54, 76, 92, 101, 103, 110, 111, 114, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, 148, 155, 160, 180, 183, 189, 201, 209, 212, 214, 219, 220, 223
 Ferrara, Marquis of, 23
 Fetti, Fra Mariano, 256, 257, 297, 298, 299, 302, 306, 311, 339
 Ficino, Marsilio, 39, 60, 67, 82, 88, 90, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 107, 161, 164, 166, 169, 183, 185, 191, 192, 208, 235
 Filiberto, 32, 44, 45
 Foix, Gaston d^r, 252, 257, 271
 Formarina, La, 321
 Fortebraccio, Carlo, 132, 133, 149
 Fracastoro, 291
 Francis I, 267, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 277, 283, 322, 324, 325, 326, 330, 331, 333, 334, 335, 336, 339
 Franco, Matteo, 161, 162, 167, 168, 169, 178, 179, 183, 193
 Frederic III, Emperor, 53
 Frescobaldi, Battista, 117
 Gallicani, Cecilia, 87
 Gennazzano, Fra Mariano da, 199, 200, 219, 241
 Gheri, Goro, 267, 283, 286, 287
 Ghilberti, L., 10, 11, 30, 33, 82
 Ghirlandaio, Domenico, 34, 89, 90, 99
 Giovio, Paolo, 249, 310
 Gonzaga, Cardinal, 280
 Gonzaga, Elisabetta, 276
 Gonzaga, Federigo, 275, 297
 Goritz, 290
 Gozzoli, Benozzo, 32, 57, 83
 Grassi, Paris de, 263, 273, 275, 281, 282, 283, 295, 304
 Guicciardini, Francesco, 214, 287, 328, 336
 Henry VIII, 252, 263, 270, 271, 326, 329
 Hutten, Ulrich von, 265, 328
 Imperia, 249, 250
 Inghicami, Tommaso, 249, 250, 276
 Innocent VIII, 158, 161, 175, 183, 184, 185, 193, 196, 201, 202, 216, 219, 263, 313, 318
 Isaak, Heinrich, 106, 190
 John XXIII, 8, 9, 15, 44
 Julius II, 130, 158, 220, 242, 244, 247, 248, 249, 251, 252, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 264, 266,

- 271, 273, 275, 284, 290, 292,
296, 301, 310, 315, 316, 322,
328, 329
- Landino, Cristoforo, 88, 90, 96,
161
- Lanfredini, Giovanni, 181, 184,
185, 189, 191
- Lascaris, 183, 294
- Lautrec, 252, 253, 277
- Leo X, Cardinal, 89, 123, 144,
159, 168, 169, 172, 174, 181-5,
190, 196, 201, 202, 203, 208,
213, 215, 216, 217, 228, 231,
232, 237, 238, 239, 241, 242,
244-57. Pope, 258-340
- Leone, Pier, 178, 213
- Lippi, Filippo, 34, 35, 36, 84
- Lippi, Filippino, 36, 89
- Longueil, Christophe, 295, 296
- Louis XI, 72, 76, 111, 121, 130,
131, 134, 146, 147, 148, 150,
151, 157, 159, 186, 317
- Louis XII, 224, 225, 242, 252, 253,
259, 263, 270
- Loyola, Ignatius, 334, 335
- Luther, Martin, 291, 313, 324,
327, 329, 333, 334
- Machiavelli, Niccolò, 61, 66, 255,
257, 270, 287, 311, 312, 329
- Madrema-non-Vuole, 302-3
- Manetti, Giannozzo, 42, 49-50, 52
- Manuel, Juan, 333, 334
- Manutius, Aldus, 295
- Martin V, 8, 9, 11, 313
- Masaccio, 16, 33, 34
- Maximilian, Emperor, 242, 324,
325, 326, 327, 329
- Medici, Alessandro, 286
- Medici, Averardo (Bicci), 3, 4
- Medici, Averardo (Junior), 12, 17,
19, 21, 32
- Medici, Carlo di Cosimo, 36, 65,
114, 115
- Medici, Caterina, 286, 287
- Medici, Clarice Strozzi, 250
- Medici, Contessina, 174, 189, 240,
309
- Medici, Cosimo Pater Patriae, 6, 8,
9, 10, 14-69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74,
76, 78, 81, 82, 83, 91, 94, 98,
106, 120, 121, 122, 134, 192,
199, 239
- Medici, Cosimo (Grand Duke),
287
- Medici, Giovanni di Bicci, 4, 7, 8, 9,
10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 61
- Medici, Giovanni di Cosimo, 36,
51, 63, 64, 65, 117
- Medici, Giovanni di Lorenzo, 108
- Leo X
- Medici, Giovanni Popolano, 221,
222, 232, 233, 241
- Medici, Giovanni delle Bande
Nere, 241, 278, 279, 287, 288,
303, 331, 332, 335, 337
- Medici, Giuliano di Piero, 77, 80,
84, 91, 98, 100, 108, 110, 114,
119, 120, 122, 124, 125, 126, 131,
132, 139, 137, 138-41, 143-4,
146, 322
- Medici, Giuliano, Duc de Nemours,
168, 169, 174, 190, 215,
231, 237, 242, 246, 250, 254,
255, 256, 257, 266, 267, 269,
270, 271, 272, 274, 275, 276, 286,
287, 292, 293, 303, 322
- Medici, Giulio, Cardinal, 144, 168,
169, 183, 232, 241, 242, 245,
253, 255, 265, 267, 271, 273,
286, 287, 289, 314, 319, 323,
324, 326, 329, 331, 333, 335,
339, 340
- Medici, Goccio, 2
- Medici, Ippolito, 286
- Medici, Lorenzo di Giovanni, 14,
20, 26, 32, 221
- Medici, Lorenzo il Magnifico, 59,
73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 81, 82, 83,
84, 85-213, 214, 215, 219, 223,
236, 273, 292, 322, 323, 340
- Medici, Lorenzo Popolano, 221,
222, 233, 278
- Medici, Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino,
123, 266, 267, 268, 269, 271,
272, 274, 276, 277, 278, 285,
286, 287, 326
- Medici, Lucia, 178
- Medici, Lucrezia Salviati, 174,
237, 250, 255, 278, 309, 327
- Medici, Maddalena Cibo, 161,
174-6, 177, 178, 179, 183, 213,
242, 265
- Medici, Maria dei Rossi, 74, 187
- Medici, Nannina, 74
- Medici, Piero il Gottoso, 16, 67,
70-84, 91, 112, 113, 116, 117,
119, 135, 187
- Medici, Piero the Unfortunate,
147, 158, 159, 161, 168, 171, 172,
174, 177, 179, 191, 202, 207,
213-43, 244, 249, 256, 279
- Medici, Pier Francesco, 118, 122,
148
- Medici, Salvistro, 2, 3

- Medici, Vieri, 20
 Mellini, Celso, 296
 Michelangelo, 10, 34, 89, 190, 239,
 267, 287, 318, 322, 323, 340
 Michelozzo, 23, 24, 32, 74
 Michelozzo, Bernardo, 207
 Mino da Fiesole, 64, 340
 Mirandola, Giovanni Pico della,
 92, 94, 166, 170, 191, 192-7,
 198, 200, 201, 208, 210, 211,
 223, 234, 235
 Molza, Francesco, 292
 Moncada, Ugo de, 278
 Montesecoco, Giambattista, 136,
 137, 138, 142, 145
 Navagero, 320
 Neroni, Dietisalvi, 54, 60, 63, 71,
 72, 77, 78, 79
 Niccoli, Niccolò de', 42, 43, 44, 45,
 134
 Nicholas V, 29, 31, 49, 50, 52, 53
 Nino, Marcantonio, 281, 283
 Nobili, Moro, 286, 298
 Orsini, Alfonsoina, 177, 189, 216,
 223, 234, 237, 238, 244, 268,
 269, 270, 274, 286, 288, 297,
 309
 Orsini, Clarice, 100, 111, 148, 153,
 161, 164, 166, 167, 168, 171, 172,
 173, 174, 177, 178, 179
 Orsini, Paolo, 226, 230, 231
 Orsini, Virginio, 207, 237
 Palaeologa, Zoe, 164
 Palaeologus, Emperor, 38
 Pandolfini, Angelo, 8, 30
 Panormita, 41
 Paul II, 75, 76, 125
 Pazzi, Andrea, 134, 142
 Pazzi, Francesco, 110, 129, 135,
 138, 139, 141, 142
 Pazzi, Guglielmo, 73, 74, 75, 110,
 135, 137, 139, 143
 Pazzi, Jacopo, 135, 136, 137, 141,
 142
 Pazzi, Piero, 74, 134
 Pazzi, Renato, 137, 142, 143
 Peruzzi, Baldassare, 311, 318
 Pescara, Marquis of, 335, 336
 Petrucci, Cardinal Alfonso, 250,
 280, 283, 298, 306
 Petrucci, Pandolfo, 280
 Picciannino, Jacopo, 152
 Picciannino, Niccolò, 46
 Pitti, Luca, 47, 54, 55, 60, 62, 71,
 72, 73, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 91
 Pius II, 36, 41, 50, 53, 54, 57, 58,
 59, 65, 120, 183
 Plethon, Gemistus, 39, 40
 Politian, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 98, 99,
 100, 103, 104, 107, 108, 109,
 131, 136, 139, 166, 167, 169,
 170-4, 177, 185, 191, 192, 193,
 196, 198, 199, 200, 208, 209,
 210, 211, 234
 Pucci, Antonio, 54, 77, 123, 160
 Pucci, Cardinal Lorenzo, 265, 310,
 318
 Pucci, Puccio, 47, 49
 Pulci, Luca, 110, 111, 162
 Pulci, Luigi, 99, 105, 104, 110,
 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167
 Querino, 300
 Rangone, Bianca, 253
 Rangone, Ercole, 284, 311
 Raphael, 245, 265, 267, 293, 303,
 311, 316-23, 332
 Riario, Girolamo, 129, 133, 136,
 137, 143, 148, 151, 157, 304
 Riario, Cardinal Raffaele, 137, 138,
 139, 140, 143, 145, 146, 175,
 248, 258, 282, 283, 339
 Ridolfi, Niccolò, 284, 302
 Robbia, Luca della, 82, 239, 257
 Romano, Giulio, 317
 Rossi, Leonetti, 187
 Rossi, Cardinal Ludovico, 74, 187,
 284, 302, 323
 Rovere, Francesco Maria della,
 Duke of Urbino, 251, 252, 255,
 274, 276, 277, 278, 280
 Rovere, Galeotto della, 247
 Ruellai, Bernardo, 74, 177
 Sadoletto, Jacopo, 248, 249, 261,
 290, 294, 295
 Salvatore del Piombo, 322, 323
 Salviati, Francesco, 130, 136, 137,
 138, 140
 Salviati, Cardinal Giovanni, 284,
 302, 311
 Salviati, Jacopo, 174, 202, 278
 Salviati, Maria, 278, 279, 287
 Sangallo, Antonio di, 272, 340
 Sangallo, Giuliano di, 101, 161,
 199
 Sampazzaro, Jacopo, 291
 Sanseverino, Cardinal, 201, 253,
 264, 305, 306
 Sansovino, Jacopo, 272
 Sanzio, see Raphael
 Sarto, Andrea del, 173

- Sauli, Cardinal, 280, 281, 282, 283, 297
 Savoy, Bona of, 132, 148, 149, 150
 Savoy, Filiberta of, 267, 270, 275
 Savonarola, Girolamo, 20, 90, 196-200, 210, 211, 212, 219, 225, 228, 229, 234, 235, 236, 237, 239, 240, 241, 245
 Schinner, Cardinal, 336
 Serapica, 293, 298, 304, 306, 309, 310, 339
 Sforza, Cardinal Ascanio, 134, 157, 217, 218, 244, 247
 Sforza, Caterina, 129, 241, 242, 278
 Sforza, Francesco, 27, 37, 47, 50, 52, 54, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 68, 71, 74, 76, 121
 Sforza, Galeazzo Maria, 37, 38, 76, 80, 81, 111, 116, 117, 121, 123, 124, 125, 126, 129, 132
 Sforza, Gian Galeazzo, 132, 179, 180, 220, 225
 Sforza, Ippolita, 73, 74, 75, 131, 133, 134, 179
 Sforza, Ludovico, 87, 121, 149, 150, 151, 154, 157, 179, 180, 183, 209, 214, 216, 220, 221, 223, 224, 225, 227, 233, 236, 240, 241
 Sixtus IV, 125, 129, 130, 132, 133, 136, 137, 143, 146, 147, 148, 151, 156, 157, 159, 182, 304
 Soderini, Cardinal, 258, 261, 282, 283
 Soderini, Niccolò, 73, 77
 Soderini, Pagolantonio, 218
 Soderini, Piero, 232, 254, 255, 261
 Soderini, Tommaso, 73, 119, 123, 127
 Squarcialupi, Antonio, 106
 Strozzi, Alessandra, 6, 65, 71, 86, 112, 142
 Strozzi, Filippo, 92, 131, 218
 Strozzi, Filippo, Junior, 250, 251, 267, 286
 Strozzi, Lorenzo, 6
 Strozzi, Lorenzo, Junior, 302
 Strozzi, Niccolò, 6
 Strozzi, Palla, 13, 23, 28, 29, 30, 49, 52
 Tolentino, Niccolò da, 21
 Tornabuoni, Giovanni, 75, 112, 113, 125, 129, 139, 148, 159, 171
 Tornabuoni, Lucrezia, 70, 80, 84, 88, 92, 103, 113, 115, 158, 162, 166, 173
 Tour d'Auvergne, Madeleine de la, 283, 286
 Traversari, Ambrogio, 43
 Trinchetini, Nicodemo, 31, 51, 54, 55, 60, 63, 64, 69, 71, 72, 78, 79
 Trivulzio, Giacomo, 254, 263
 Urbino, Federigo Montefeltro, Duke of, 80, 124, 127, 128, 133, 146, 148, 150
 Uzzano, Niccolò da, 8, 11, 12, 13, 17
 Valori, Francesco, 231
 Valori, Filippo, 207, 209, 212
 Vercelli, Battista da, 280, 281, 283
 Verrocchio, Andrea, 34, 118, 143, 187
 Vida, Marco, 297
 Vinci, Leonardo da, 34, 143, 187, 266, 267, 322
 Vinello, Vitelli, 130
 Wolsey, Cardinal, 269, 271, 283, 326, 333, 335, 338

